

From Public Sphere to Interpretative Citizenship:

Chang Ta-chun and The Ideal of Political Praxis

By

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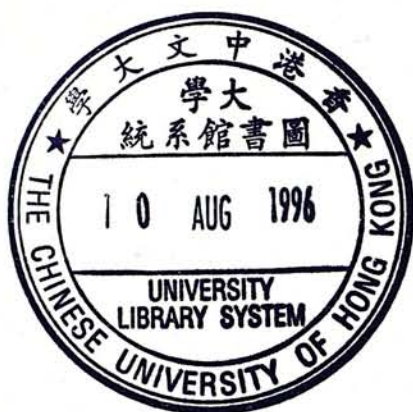
Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis presents an attempt to explore, through remapping Habermas's model of the public sphere in the postmodernist context, the possible uses of literature and hermeneutics in relation to counter-hegemonic social movements in contemporary Taiwan. Through three of Taiwanese novelist Chang Ta-chun's works, I propose a hermeneutic construction of the public sphere by using Gadamer's hermeneutics. Habermas's model of the public sphere, which rests on a distinction between the public and the private, tends to produce a single public space within which effects of political liberty and equality are to be manifested and differences between all citizens are to be erased, and a plurality of private spaces in which the full force of all those differences are maintained. It defines the citizens by their political rights, that is, participation in the public sphere to influence state policies, and is thus grossly inadequate as a framework for analysing radical democratic movements. Based on a brief examination of the underlying assumptions of Habermas's public sphere, his model of communicative action and his skepticisms towards the institutions of the mass media, I try to explain why a hermeneutic conception of the public sphere suggests itself to be a more appropriate framework for conceiving the issue of citizenship. Rather than emphasizing political rights and political participation, a hermeneutic reading of citizenship has its roots in the space for understanding and dialogue. The works of Chang will help me elaborate the three aspects of dialogue which define a hermeneutic citizen: dialogue with the past, dialogue with the self and others, and dialogue with institutions.

While each of Chang's works reminds us that our understanding of the past, the reality and ourselves are mediated by language, his insistence and belief in the ability and rights of the readers to interpret signal acts of resistance and transgression to the enclosed discursive realm of ideological interpellation. Literature thus provides a space for readers to understand themselves and others in a dialogical manner which equips them with a political consciousness in order that they can be ready to be engaged in counter-hegemonic struggles. So a construction of the hermeneutic public sphere through literature, which emphasizes mutual understanding and genuine communication, expands the possibility for social transformation. As a space for the common creation of meaning, it is thus a radical critique of political democracy, rejecting to take politics as the determining level of all social struggles.

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Chapter One

Introduction: On Remapping the Public Sphere

My devotion to the present project comes chiefly from a conviction in the ability of "dialogue" to bring about mutual understanding and to open up the space needed for the common creation of meaning. The conception of the public sphere thus provides an appropriate framework in contextualizing the notion of dialogue amidst historical and institutional grounds. Through a critical study of three works of Taiwanese writer Chang Ta-chun 張大春, I want to explore the space that the literary public sphere may generate for political praxis in counter-hegemonic struggles in the process of a community's identity formation. In this chapter, I want to introduce the scope of the present project through three leading questions. First, why I want to work on the notion of the public sphere. Second, why I want to study the works of Chang Ta-chun. And third, why I approach the problem through Gadamer's hermeneutics.

The construction of the public sphere as a fundamentally historical category is first developed by Jurgen Habermas, in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, in which he links the conception to the formation of the bourgeois society under capitalism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He sets out to establish what the category of "public" means in the bourgeois society and how its meaning and material operation are transformed in the centuries after its constitution. Craig Calhoun remarks that the motivation for this lies largely in Habermas's lifelong attempt to "reground the Frankfurt School project of critical theory in order

to get out of the pessimistic cul de sac in which Horkheimer and Adorno found themselves in the postwar era" (1992:5). Habermas turns away from the search of a subject who can transcend the logic of the cultural industry and develops an account of intersubjective communicative processes and their emancipatory potential which has its grounds on rational-critical discourse. This, according to him, takes place in the sphere of the public, which is delineated as a *fourth* term, as distinct from the state, the market place, and the intimate sphere of the family. In this realm, people can participate in open discussions in matters concerning the general public. The institution of literature (salons, coffeehouses, bookclubs, and the press) is very significant in preparing the ground for a political public sphere. Hansen notes,

Rooted in the sphere of familial privacy, the subjectivity that subtended the bourgeois public sphere was articulated through the symbolic matrix of culture, especially writing, reading, and literary criticism--activities that challenged the interpretive monopoly of church and state authorities. (1993:197)

Habermas's study of the public sphere can be regarded as his first attempt to map his project of modernity. Public discourse (and what Habermas later and generally calls communicative action) provides a possible mode of the coordination of human life, between the three paradigms of science, morality and art. These are separated from the general public and from each other because of the professionalized treatment and institutionalization of scientific discourse, theories of morality and the production and criticism of art (1983:9). Habermas maintains that a "reified

everyday praxis can only be cured by creating unconstrained interaction of the cognitive with the moral-practical and aesthetic-expressive elements" (ibid 11-12). Therefore, Habermas sees the functions of the public sphere primarily in emancipation from religious and metaphysical dogma and political domination.

Structural transformation comes about, Habermas finds, as private organizations begin increasingly to assume public power on the one hand, while the state penetrates the private realm on the other, thus blurring the distinction between the two. He also feels that the advent of mass culture and the growth of the mass media turn the critical activity of public discourse to a passive culture consumption. This transformation means literally a disintegration of the public sphere, because with the loss of a notion of common interests and the rise of consumption orientation, the members of the public sphere lose their common ground.

Habermas's analysis is truly ambitious and largely compelling, yet there remain some areas of difficulties which make it hard to see how his construction of the public sphere could be truly pluralistic and could help bring about a democratic society. First, he treats identity formation as essentially private and prior to participation in the idealized public sphere of rational-critical discourse. To Habermas, the "intimate sphere" of the family and the institutions of private life, especially those of literary productions and criticism, generally creates people (in fact, men) who are able to enter the public. This notion, however, locates identity formation in the realm of private life and therefore outside of politics and public discourse. Calhoun remarks that it is because of this that "Habermas cannot see any

positive public role for what today is called 'identity politics'. In his model, participants have no say in "settling arguments or planning action", let alone "altering identities" (Calhoun 1993:279). Second, Habermas's model of an "Ideal Speech Situation", offered to guide rational conversation among citizens in the public domain in pursuing consensus based on the "best argument" (1970:369), rests on a belief that in the absence of institutions of repression and domination, language could become a transparent medium through which a pure subjectivity could appear in the public domain. He claims that it "should be possible to demonstrate the deformations of pure intersubjectivity, induced by the social structure, on the basis of asymmetries in the performance of dialogue rules" (1970:372). That is, however, an impossibility. Language develops in conjunction with practices and institutions, whereby forces and dominations embedded in them bear in the language they help to constitute. A model of communication which does not take these factors into consideration will fail to cope with the problem of the disempowerment of the marginalized groups. Third, Habermas's approach treats interpersonal differences primarily as matters of economic interests, which leads to a neglect of other kinds of differences. A lot of other groups are banned from political participation. The idea of a single public sphere is, then, not of much utility. Feminist critic Nancy Fraser, for example, has challenged his model by proposing the need of conceptualizing "subaltern counterpublics" for marginalized social groups like women and members of the plebian classes (123).

With the advent of the post-modernist movement, Habermas's model is further brought under attack on other fronts. Lyotard's emphasis of the

heterogeneity of language games refutes Habermas's claim in the production of true consensus through rational-critical discourse (1985:43). His denial of the political as the determining or determinate metalanguage challenges the representational space of the political. As he says, "Everything is political if politics is the possibility of the differend on the occasion of the slightest linkage. Politics is not everything, though, if by that one believes it to be the genre that contains all the genres. It is not *a* genre" (1983:139). The proliferation of the mass media, as characterized by Baudrillard, has also collapsed all boundaries between true and false, appearance and reality, surface and depth, life and art and so on into the universe of the simulacra controlled by "simulation" models and codes. The political sphere, on entering this game of simulation, also loses its specificity. It does not matter whether people can have their own opinions, since the reproductions of our thoughts and behaviour through these models and codes already form a **simulacrum of public opinion** (1983a:126).

These areas of difficulties and attacks cast doubts upon Habermas's model of the public sphere. However, its emphasis on dialogue and interaction remains to me an important attraction as it signals a space for people to mutually create a sense of collective identity. Moreover, on rereading the analysis of Habermas's critics, I am surprised to see how close their analysis of the status of knowledge and power in contemporary society is to that of Habermas. I would thus draw from this closeness that indeed the post-modern condition, as characterized by Lyotard, is a radicalization that in no way challenges the construction of the public sphere as such. It is, therefore, the purpose of the present project to renegotiate and remap the

public sphere as an analytical category in the postmodernist context which I have just delineated. I will draw upon the works of contemporary Taiwanese writer Chang Ta-chun for a critical examination of how literature can contribute in the development of a radical pluralistic democracy. Through his works, I would propose a hermeneutic conception of the public sphere as a dimension of citizens, which makes room for the common construction of meaning. In other words, "the political is not a place in which citizens search for a meaning that is somehow already given and longing to be discovered" (Alejandro 72). The construction of the public sphere as hermeneutic also "conceives of citizens as subjects who are rooted in a historical situation" (ibid 76) and admits that language, which mediates our understanding of the world, is ideologically-laden. As such, it is a place for interaction and understanding rather than a deciphering of distorted communication and a pursuing of the "best argument". On this account, a hermeneutic public sphere should be conceived as a terrain in which meanings and traditions are enforced but in the process, new and different meanings are created. It is not to say that the public sphere is completely free of power, but it "encompasses a mosaic of subordinate and dominant discourses without fixed boundaries between them" (ibid 206).

Among the so-called the baby-boom generation of writers in Taiwan, Chang Ta-chun is widely known to be the prodigal son of contemporary literature, a mixture somewhat between an enfant terrible and a self-styled playboy of words. Chan Hung-chih 詹宏志, in the preface to Chang's work, *Szu-hsi Yu-kuo* 四喜憂國 [Szu-hsi Worries about the Country], has the following comments about the characteristic and achievement of Chang's use

of language,¹

In a place where people are so calculative about the difference between "Taipei, China" and "Taiwan", between "hijacking" and "plundering of aircraft", we cannot afford to ignore the ability of linguistic images to destroy. Chang's language game helps readers realize the fatal attraction of words, their difficulties and trap, in order that readers can have a critical attitude towards "official discourse".

在一個斤斤計較「中國·台北」和「台灣」之差異的地方，斟酌「劫機」與「奪機」的不同的地方，語言真象的破壞性毋寧不可小看，張大春在文字上做遊戲，讓讀者發現文字的致命吸引力，文字的困難與陷阱，從而對一切「官方說法」有新的反省懷疑——這是積極的價值了。(1988:9)

Chan points out a cognizance in Chang's writings about the ability of language to frame and distort reality and an intention to challenge official discourse. But there exists at the same time in his works a skepticism about his own writings, i.e., if reality exists only through our representation, he, as a writer, cannot afford to ignore the damage he can have done through the way he uses his language. In his first publication, *Chi-ling Tu* 雞翎圖 [The Poultry Field], he has been asking these questions,

There has been more than half a year since I put down my pen on writing fiction. The questions that I have been asking lie here: how can I assume that my narration is "real"? And how can I prove that my interpretation is not too bold and daring? Is the cultural spectacle I frame and represent distorted? At least, characters in some of my stories are projections of people I have come across or even lived with. Whether I mean it or not, these projections will lead to distortions and differences. Everything is so obscure. So, am I

¹Quotations from all the Chinese texts are my translation.

"fair" enough? Is this just a problem of writing technique? Or is it because of the neglect of the innate right of the author that this right has in turn become enlarged?

停筆於小說已半年有餘，我經常思考著的問題就在這裏：如何假定我的描述是「寫實」的？又如何證明我的詮釋不是大膽而武斷的？我所框架所呈現的文化景觀是未經扭曲的嗎？至少，某些故事裏的人物都是我現實生活中所接觸甚至相處過的人們的投影，而無論有意無心，投影勢必導致曲折和差異，勢必是朦朧的。那麼，我足夠「公正」嗎？這只是寫作技巧的問題？還是小說作者先天的權限被忽視而擴大了呢？
(1979:7)

Always skeptical but always daring, we see Chang moving in a very impatient pace, pushing discursive frontiers in terms of both stylistic strategies and subject matters of writing. Among his many talents and achievements, he is also known to have single-handedly created a literary genre hsin-wen shao-shuo (news-fiction), in which he sets foot on the very thin line between fiction and reality by wielding together what is reported in daily news and his own creative imagination. He puts it himself in the preface of his fiction *The Motel Guide*, that "in my life of finding the answer, new fictional language, new language games, new game rules, and new rules' residuals are being continually brewed, displayed and destroyed" (在我尋找答案的生命裏，新的小說語言、新的語言遊戲、新的遊戲規則以及新的規則殘骸正在不斷地蘊釀、呈現、破滅。) (1989:6). Up to this year Chang has published fourteen books. I want to categorize them as follows:

Historical Fiction:

Huan-hsi Tse

歡喜賊

[Loving Thieves]

Li-shih Sao-miao: Yung-cheng Ti Ti-I-ti Hsueh 歷史掃描：雍正的第一滴血

[Snapshots into History:

The First Blood of Emperor Yung-cheng]

Shih-chien Chu 時間軸

[The Time-Axis]

News Fiction:

Ta Shuo-huang Chia 大說謊家

[The Great Liar]

Hua-shen Po-shih: Wei-Yen Shuang-Ting 化身博士：危言爽聽

[Conversion Doctor: Dangerous]

Mei-jen Shei-hsin Ke Shang-chiao 沒人寫信給上校

[No One Writes to the Colonel]

Science Fiction:

Ping-pien 病變

[The Virus Transformation]

Short Stories:

Chi-ling Tu 雞翎圖

[The Poultry Field]

Kung-yu Tao-yu 公寓導遊

[The Motel Guide]

Szu-hsi Yu-kuo 四喜憂國

[Szu-hsi Worries about the Country]

Autobiographical Fiction:

Wo Mei-mei 我妹妹

[My Little Sister]

Shao-nien Ta-tou Chun ti Sheng-huo Ch'ou-chi 少年大頭春的生活週記

[Big-Head Chun's Weekly Journal]

Commentaries:

I-yen Pu-ho

異言不合

[The Difference]

Chang Ta-chun ti Wen-hsueh I-chien

張大春的文學意見

[The Literary Opinions of Chang Ta-chun]

His overarching concern about the problematic relationship between language, human beings and reality constitutes a major reason why he is so helpful in my discussion of a hermeneutic public sphere. The corpus of his works shows the various angles through which he constructs the problematic. Through his historical fiction, he analyses how official records and traditional myths become the medium through which historical events are recorded and transmitted. They have thus legitimized the way these events should be understood and interpreted. Then, through his news-fiction, he contextualizes the problem in today's media-saturated world in which matters about truth and reality become more and more institutionalised by the mass media. With these doubts, there is no wonder that we see such a grave sadness about how language has been used as a tool of domination in his autobiographical fiction. Even the way one looks at oneself is dominated by language which is so heavily laden with ideology and institutional practices. But it does not mean that human subjects are totally under the control of these historical and insitutional practices. Through problematizing the relationship between language, human beings and reality, Chang tries to resist and transgress the limits that language has on us.

I met him this summer in his television workshop in Taipei through a grant I obtained under the CUHK-National Taiwan University exchange programme. Among the things he has told me, the one thing that impresses me most is his deep conviction that the right of interpretation of any literary work lies in the readers and not the authors. There is where the hope lies. I can understand why he continues to write and write even though he is so very skeptical about the ability of language to reflect or distort reality. There is no need to despair, as the readers can have control over the text in his/her interpretation. He explains this in his account of his news-fiction, "There will not be any passive reader, since every reader can pose questions to the text from his memory. The difference only lies in the capacity of the memory" (一個完全被動的讀者是不可能存在的。因為任何一個讀者都有可資憑藉的記憶去向他面前的作品提出問題，其區別只在那個記憶庫量的大小而已。)(1992:11). Reading is a process of dialogue. Readers, as they read, are actively interacting with the text using their memory, be it personal or communal. This is a process through which our subjectivity is constructed, since memory, to quote Freeman, "often has to do not merely with recounting the past, but with making sense of it--from 'above', as it were--is an interpretive act the end of which is an enlarged understanding of the self" (29).

Chang's problematizing of the relation between language, texts, readers and reality sheds lights on what it means to be a communicative citizen, and hence, the insufficiencies of Habermas's model of the political public sphere. Having dialogues with others only on matters concerning the general public in the public realm is only part of the story. His historical

fiction, autobiographical fiction and news-fiction hint to me that citizenship, as a political category that could make possible a collective identity, is also defined and subtended by, firstly the citizens' interpretations of their past, secondly their making sense of the social reality contextualized through its practices and institutions, and thirdly their understanding of themselves, all of which being mediated by the medium of language which is an ideological and historical construct. I also gradually come to understand that "citizens are citizens to the extent that they are engaged in a fourfold dialogue: dialogue among themselves; dialogue with the past; dialogue with institutions and traditions, and dialogue with themselves" (Alejandro 76). In rearticulating the relationship between language on the one hand, and human beings, reality and institutional practices on the other, Chang actually extends the notion of politics to every social site of production and reproduction, thereby challenging "the very possibility of defining the 'public' (and attendant divisions of public and private) in any singular, foundational and ahistorical manner" (Hansen 181). Therefore, instead of calling for the construction of a public realm for discussions of public matters, I propose, through an analysis of three of Chang's works in the following three chapters, a hermeneutic construction of the public sphere, which makes room for these three kinds of dialogue, i.e., dialogue with history, with the self, and with institutions. These texts are, respectively, *Shih-chien Chu*, *Wo Mei-mei* and *Ta Shuo-huang Chia*.

I see a common theme in these three novels in creating conditions of dialogues in the way Chang uses fictional discourse in intervening into historical, autobiographical and institutional discourses. By intervention, I

mean a double act of decoding these various discourses which "presume and construct their appropriate subject in a way which leaves little room for consideration of resistance" (Smith 153), as well as reinterpreting them in order to "locate within the 'subject' a *process*, or a tension which is the product of its having been called upon to adopt multifarious subject-positions" (ibid 157). Discourse, here, obviously does not mean a stable, continuous entity that can be discussed like a fixed formal text. I am using the word in a Foucauldian sense, which implies a site of conjunction of power and knowledge, and which will alter its form and significance depending on who is speaking, the speaker's position of power, and the institutional context in which the speaker happens to be situated (Foucault 1980:100). I regard Chang's works as attempts to "restore to discourse its character as an event" (Foucault 1972:229), in an analysis of the controls and the procedures by which discourse operates, both interpersonally and institutionally (ibid 216). He is always careful to "situate" his novels in a discursive context and then uses that situating to problematize the very notions of knowledge, power, subjectivity and representation. And this situating puts the readers into dialogues with the three kinds of discourse.

My aim, as stated earlier, is to look for, through the analytical category of the public sphere, points of intervention for political praxis in a post-modern capitalist society. Habermas's model constituting of bourgeois men gathering together to talk about matters of public concern is grossly inadequate. Here the literary public sphere can step in as "a stimulator and promulgator of action" (Hohendahl 68), because of its ability to challenge the discursive formation of knowledge and arouse dialogue between readers

and the realm of their constitution and history, or, "the sphere of historical action" (Smith 159). The classical public sphere was constituted in double form, literary and political. In a hermeneutic construction of the public sphere, we can no longer draw a clear boundary between what is the literary and what is the political, since, counter-hegemonic struggles do not just come from a dialogue between public people, but dialogues between every citizen with their histories, both personal and communal, and with institutional practices. And this is where I see literature can intervene.

Let me explain it more clearly through the contemporary literary scene in Taiwan--where literature all along has a very strong political orientation--starting from the year 1949. If we group ten years as a unit, the 50's then is a decade of war literature, for which a main theme is reviving the nation. The 60's sees the rise of Modernist Literature, alongside the growing up of the babyboom generation. At the same time, we see a new type of nostalgic literature which develops from the war literature of the previous decade. The 70's is a decade for Native Literature. Coming to the 80's, various kinds of literatures flourish. Let us look at how Chang describes it in a symposium called "The Future of Literature", "the 80's is an eclectic decade, a time for discourses of 'marginal subjects'. Various discourses which assumed marginal positions in the past, for example feminism, factionism, local racism, environmental protection...etc., come to the fore" (八〇年代是個集大成的時代，是「邊緣主體」論述的時代，以往許多退至邊緣位置的論述，如女性主義，政治團體、地方種族主義、環保……等等，都更清晰的浮出檯面。) (28). There witnesses in the 80's a rise in the number and variety of political fictions. In a time of the rise of feminism, the

awakenings of the indigenous and the growth of social movements, the writing of fiction becomes a site of struggles where we see subversion from the margin. Literary critic Tsai Shih-ping 蔡詩萍 even labels these various discourses as "the discourse in dissidence" 反支配論述, locating them in the struggles of the civil society in Taiwan (460). However, as critic Lin Yao-te 林耀德 also notices, in this rapid development of political fictions, the motif of "identifying with Taiwan" or "constructing the cultural subject of Taiwan" has become more than popular. It is even being abused to the extent that it was "pan-politicized", for the self-legitimation of writers or for the evaporation of the "non-self" (140). Chang's works, to me, is a direct response to this phenomenon of pan-politicization in literature. Instead of claiming to speak for the Taiwanese, he problematizes the issues of representation and extends the notion of politics to every area of our everyday life. I hope that a critical study of his works will shed light on the role of literature in a society's counter-hegemonic struggles.

After explaining why I have to work on Chang Ta-chun, it is now necessary to explain why I propose a hermeneutic reading of the public sphere. To be sure, the following three chapters will be able to offer a more concrete analysis. But here just let me offer a few sketchy remarks. After that, I will deal with the arguments between Habermas and Gadamer so as to see how the theory of the latter will help in a hermeneutic construction of the public sphere, one which I think is genuinely pluralistic.

Why hermeneutics ? First, Gadamer's hermeneutics, following Heidegger, considers understanding and interpretation as fundamental elements defining the human condition. Gadamer holds that we are born

into a tradition, which is always at work in our process of understanding. He remarks, "*understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition*, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated" (1975:290). This helps us see the abstract universality of citizenship within a specific historical context. Second, Gadamer assumes that human subjects' relation to the world is fundamentally and essentially linguistic. Understanding takes place through language, which is a record and embodiment of our history and tradition, rather than a neutral space. Therefore, in understanding, we cannot erase our historical perspectives, which are embodied in language. We have, on the contrary, to achieve a fusion of horizons between our historical standpoint and the historical horizon of the text or the event we are trying to understand. Citizenship, on this view, appears as a fusion between the past and the present, as an interpretive practice against the backdrop of different and contradicting traditions. Interpretation here is not the finding of an essential or pre-existing truth, because each particular horizon only provides the range of vision that can be seen from "a particular vantage point" (1975:302). Interpretation, then, is always an active construction of meaning. Citizenship, in Gadamer's hermeneutics, is a terrain in which individuals re-examine their traditions, accept or reject social practices. It is also "a space of memories and struggles where collective identities are played out" (Alejandro 36).

In Habermas's conceptualization of critical theory, he has actually turned to Gadamer's theory of interpretive understanding, in order to "counter science's objectivistic self-understanding by reflections on its

conditions of possibility and locating these in pre-scientific activities of social life" (Mendelson 45). However, Habermas feels that Gadamer fails to do justice to the power of reflection and thus cannot grasp the opposition between reason on the one hand and prejudice and authority on the other. Reflection has the power to break with authority and reject the claims of traditions. He claims, "Reflection dissolves substantiality because it not only confirms but also breaks up dogmatic forces. Authority and knowledge do not converge" (1986:269-270). For him, the power of critique has its source in reflection, governed by rationality, which, "takes its bearing from the concept of ideal concurrence and in this respect guided by the regulative principle of rational discourse" (1985:315). Therefore, instead of agreeing with Gadamer that "knowledge of oneself can never be complete" because of "the essence of the historical being that we are" (1975:302), he believes that rational discourse can bring about "a penetrating understanding which is not deflected by delusion" (1985:315). I derive from this that Habermas and Gadamer entertain very different understanding of the notion of dialogue. For Habermas, dialogue entails a deciphering of "systematically distorted patterns of communication", and a correction of "false consensus" (1973:9). I think the assumptions of distorted communication and false consensus contradict the democratic implication of his model of the public sphere. It assumes that some citizens, presumably the majority, are deceived by ideological claims which those who have the ability to produce critical rational-discourse can unmask. A conversation that accepts these assumptions is not one among equals. The Gadamerian dialogue also has the notion of "correctness", but it comes from a fusion of horizons which

emphasizes the historical specificities and hence the needs of each individual interlocutor, and a readiness to accept that the other's opinions are correct, instead of a suspicion that he/she is being deluded. As he points out,

the same ideal of reason that must guide every attempt to convince, regardless of the side from which it starts, forbids one from claiming for oneself the correct insight on the basis of the delusion of the other. Further, all social and political manifestations of the will are dependent upon rhetoric's construction of public convictions. This includes, and I mean this by that it belongs to the concept of reason, that one must always reckon with the possibility that the opposite conviction, whether of the individual or of the social realm, could be correct. (1990:293-294)

So, it is not too difficult to understand why Gadamer entertains a more dynamic understanding of the public sphere, as contrasted to Habermas's account of it as a space of depoliticization and overt manipulation where conversations are administered:

Even the technical forms of shaping opinion which our industrial society has developed always at some point a moment of consent, be it on the side of the consumer who can withhold his agreement, or be it, and this is decisive, in the way our mass media are not simply extensions of a unitary political will, but rather are the showplace of political controversies, which for their part both reflect and determine political occurrences in society. (ibid 292-293)

To Gadamer, rationality is important for generating the human good. But it "cannot be detached from hermeneutic praxis" (ibid 283). Put differently, it requires the exercise of phronesis, namely, practical judgement in the face of changing circumstances and concrete situations. Habermas, on the other hand, approaches the problem from a Kantian

Habermas's model, and then take on from there to textual analysis. I have to admit that I do not have real life experience about what people in Taiwan are doing in their everyday counter-hegemonic struggles. But I do hope that through my reading of Chang's texts I will be able to show what the literary public sphere can do with regard to the general reading public. I believe in the remark of Ricoeur, that literary texts can serve as a mediation between people and the world, between people and others, between people and themselves (1991:27).² In the final chapter, I will attempt to evaluate what Chang has done amidst the political context of contemporary Taiwan. Above all, it is my deepest concern that I will be able to see for myself what literature and hermeneutics can do, in opening up a site of struggles for political praxis.

²The original statement of Ricoeur is "It is a mediation between man and the world, between man and man, between man and himself". I have changed the word "man" here due to its sexist connotation. The word "people" is used instead which is more gender-wise encompassing.

construction, i.e., an agreement given by reason under an Ideal Speech Situation. Though I accept the importance of critical-rational reflection, I prefer a hermeneutic conception of the public sphere as a place of dialogue and play rather than a paradigm that claims to be the incarnation of rationality when it is, in a hermeneutic sense, just another description of our contingency and historicity.

So I hope that I have managed to explain my contention in the present project through a brief reexamination of Habermas's model of the public sphere and its weaknesses, of Chang's works contextualized in the contemporary Taiwan literary scene, and of how Gadamer's hermeneutics helps me construct a hermeneutic reading of the public sphere, which I regard a truly pluralistic one. In the coming chapter, I will analyse how Chang has used *Shih-chien Chu* to intervene into historical discourse. Particular attention will be paid to the historical dimension which defines in a fundamental sense a hermeneutic citizenship. In Chapter Three, I will demonstrate through *Wo Mei-mei* how an autobiographical metafiction helps one understand oneself and others, constituted in an attempt to counter-balance the ideological interpellation of one's gendered subject position. In Chapter Four, I will use *Ta Shuo-huang Chia* in regrounding my conception of a hermeneutic public sphere in today's media-saturated world, as it cannot remain a metaphysical ideal. So the sequence of the coming chapters starts from a reflection of the underlying assumptions of a hermeneutic public sphere, which proceeds to a self-reflection of individual participants, and which ends finally with an institutional reconfiguration. Each chapter will start with a brief reexamination of relevant theoretical constructs of

Chapter Two

Living as Inbetweenness An Encounter with *Shih-chien Chu*

In Habermas's essay, "A Review of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*", we see him raising quite a number of arguments against Gadamer's hermeneutics, the general theme of which is that Gadamer has absolutized historical understanding at the expense of critique. According to Habermas, critical reflection provides a critique of tradition and thus has the ability to reject the claims that traditions have on us. This essay serves to show the assumption that Habermas has in his idea of the building of a rational-critical discourse. In this chapter, I will first present his claims that reason has over the authority of tradition. Then, through a critical examination of *Shih-chien Chu* 時間軸 [The Time-Axis], I will try to rearticulate a hermeneutic conception of reason, and reassert the intrinsic historicity of human subjects. Afterwards, we will see how Chang uses *Shih Chien-chu* to challenge official historical discourse, in an attempt to mediate our dialogue with historical texts. We will also see how Gadamer's conception of conversation as the paradigm of understanding helps us construct a hermeneutic reading of citizenship.

Habermas's model of the public sphere consists of public people communicating rationally through a language which is self-transparent. This is an assumption he has for his Ideal Speech Situation and the condition he later develops through the two volumes of *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Rational discourse, for Habermas, is a way for people to get away

from power and domination and come to a true consensus on matters of public concern. On this assumption, rational-critical reflection is a critical power of mankind in getting away from all kinds of false prejudices, including historical prejudices. His essay, "A Review of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*" shows the relation he perceives between reason on the one hand and tradition and authority on the other. I want to have a brief review of the area that is most relevant to our present study. Reflection, according to Habermas, has the power to break away with authority and reject the claims of traditions if they contradict with its reasoned insight. Accordingly, he feels that Gadamer defends the continuity between tradition and interpretation to such an extent that he loses sight of the effect historical self-consciousness has on our relation to tradition. Although he agrees that it is impossible to purge the interpreter of all traces of his own participation in history, he does not think that tradition and prejudices should have authority on us. Specifically, he argues that "reflected appropriation of tradition breaks up the naturelike (*naturwuchsig*) substance of tradition and alters the position of the subject on it" (1986:268). Therefore, our faculty of reason should be able to help us filter the prejudices which are illegitimate, since "in grasping the genesis of the tradition from which it proceeds and on which it turns back, reflection shakes the dogmatism of life-practices" (*ibid*). So reflection, immersed in history as it is, can alter its relation to tradition so that the latter no longer has any claims on us. He asserts,

The right of reflection demands that the hermeneutic approach restrict itself. It calls for a reference system that *goes beyond the framework of tradition as such*; only then can tradition also be criticised. But

how could such a reference system be legitimized except, in turn, out of the appropriation of tradition ? ¹ (ibid 270)

Thus, we can see that Habermas's model of dialogue is based on a conception of reason which lies outside the realm of history. He believes that it is only through an abandoning of historical influences can the true consensus and the best argument be brought about. I agree with Habermas that in appropriating our tradition, we have to exercise our power of reflection in order to filter illegitimate prejudices. I also agree with him that a critical reflection of tradition will alter our relation to history. However, I understand the faculty of reason as something, like understanding, which always remains *situated in history*, since reflection takes place through language, which is heavily shaped by historical forces. Gadamer has shown us that "reflection on effective history--can never be completely achieved; yet the fact that it cannot be completed is due not to a deficiency in reflection but to the essence of the historical being that we are" (1975:302). The conception of rationality, as Habermas himself admits, cannot be free of traditional values. He says, "What counts in a given case as a reason or ground...depends of course on the background cultural knowledge that the participants in communication share as members of a particular life-world" (1982:270). Accordingly, rationality would likely be an expression of dominant views in traditions, which means that a universal conception of truth could hardly be guaranteed. Further, deciding what is the best argument for everyone has to take into consideration the historical specificities of people. As Georgia Warnke in her study about the

¹italics mine.

hermeneutic turn in the development of political philosophy also remarks, "A conception of justice is now said not to issue from the truth of human nature or the requirements of human reason but, instead, simply from an understanding of the meaning of the society's own political traditions" (1992:111). Her assertion makes a point in saying that we neither need to nor can we transcend the history of our culture to find external grounds upon which to justify our political beliefs and practices. Instead, we have to acknowledge the thickness of our culture and attempt to uncover or articulate principles embedded in a community's practices, institutions and norms of actions. As a result, I will say that in our attempts to find what is the best for everybody through rational discourse, we cannot and should not get away from our historicity. I will, through an analysis of *Shih Chien-chu*, offer a conception of reason which is situated in history.

One more question to be solved, why should we be so concerned with intervening into the discourse of history? Chang himself makes it clear²:

I do not believe that history is a "linear continuity". I would rather think that in every epoch people can only know a little part of their history, and some information in this little part gets to be called history. This historical information, through translation and amendments, becomes issues, evidences, beliefs, laws, norms and

²The following quotation comes from his book *Li-shih Sao Miao: Yung-cheng Ti Ti-i-ti Hsueh*, in which studies into the side history and traditional myths of ancient China are collected. Chang tells readers in the preface that he wants to punch into things that have been left out by historians, things that are funny and interesting, in an attempt to challenge and rearticulate the historical mode of interpretation. A central belief in the book is that these pieces of side history and myths just reflect the orientations of interpretations of historians. This quotation thus also reflects the rationale underneath the writing of *Shih Chien Chu*.

glory in the hearts of people, so that they can adapt to different kinds of life in that era.

我不太相信歷史是一「縱的連續體」；而寧可認為每一個時代的人只能認識其當代的一小部分，而這一小部分之中有些資料被稱為「歷史」。這些歷史資料在大多數的當代人心目中經由翻譯和翻修的手續，化身考題、證據、信念、定律、規範和榮耀，以便於人們適應當代的種種生活。(1991:7-8)

Chang has made a very important discovery that people do not have complete knowledge of their history. His refutation that history is a "linear continuity" also expresses that what is called history is in fact interpretation of historians which have always legitimized the way historical events should be understood. So, intervening into historical discourses through the writing of fiction with the aim of offering new interpretations has the effect of challenging the ideological interpellation of historical discourses and of relocating the human subjects, through the act of interpretation, in their own interactive encounter with the historical texts. As Foucault claims,

But if interpretation is the violent or surreptition of a system of rules, which in itself has no meaning, in order to impose a direction, to bend it to a new will, to force its participation in a different game, and to subject it to secondary rules, then the development of humanity is a series of interpretations. (1977:151-152)

As such, interpretation offers a site of struggle against official historical narrative.

The storyline line of *Shih-chien Chu* follows the science fiction convention of a time-tunnel, through which four people from twentieth century Taiwan are brought to late Qing by four light balls coming from the counter-universe. The four people are, respectively, an old learned librarian,

a hawker who is previously a thief, an old maid who loves imagination, and a reporter who is used to incurring unnecessary troubles. The eight of them witness the outbreak of the Sino-Franco War, and their presence actually changes the course of historical events which has taken place. Through a brief analysis in what follows, I want to demonstrate three criteria necessary for the understanding of a historical text. First a recognition that prejudices exist and we cannot use our faculty of reason to get rid of it. Second, a readiness to understand historical events by staying open and not to judge them with the faculty of reason. Third, an appreciation of our intrinsic historicity. With these assumptions, we will see how Chang challenges the authority of the official writing of history, the act of which finds its roots in the conviction that human subjects are always interpretative and are always situated in the collective memory of tradition.

In the story a lot of different people are mingled together through events leading to the Sino-Franco War. Not only the four people and the four light balls, but also an abundance of generals, soldiers, provincial presidents, a Chinese chivalrous hero, a Chinese budhist monk and some French nuns. Each of these carries with them different ideas about what is going on between the French, the Chinese and the Vietnamese, prejudgements which are cultivated by their respective national history or social background. The four modern people, for example, who are required to study the history of the war when they go to school, look at the war very differently from the French. Tien Mama, the librarian, who is also the most wideread among the four in areas about Chinese history, perceives the war as an instance of Western imperialism which victimizes the Chinese. The

French nun, on the contrary, feels that it is the uncivilized Chinese who bring up conflicts between the two nations. These prejudgements can also be shaped by personal history. Wang Tuan the reporter, for example, who makes his living upon locating news events, entertains the attitude of an onlooker hoping for distasters. Or like Ah Chen the ex-thief who does not have much schooling. He always keeps a very humble and non-judgemental attitude towards what is right or wrong between nations. As shown in these people, the process of interpretation always begins with projections of meanings from the interpreters' own situation and that understanding is the working-out of these structures. These prejudices are themselves built upon how historical events have been understood. So it implies that we are not looking at objective things as autonomous subjects. On the contrary, we cannot get away from these prejudices and judge the historical text with pure reason. As Lyotard also remarks in discussing the postmodern situation,

We are always within opinion, and there is no possible discourse of truth on the situation. And there is no such discourse because one is caught up in a story, one cannot get out of this story to take up a metalinguistic position from which the whole could be dominated. We are always immanent to stories in the making, even when we are the ones telling the story to the other. (1985:43)

We can never take up a position outside of history, one which is governed by pure reason. However, it is not to say that we stand totally within the realm of prejudices, letting them dominate the way we look at things. On the contrary, these prejudices exist in a dialectical relationship with the horizon of the text. The interaction of the two actually enables the process of active interpretation, through which we critically examine our

preunderstandings. The following dialogue will serve to illustrate this point,

"...Once you go into history, you have two roles: first a role as a 'modern person' of the twentieth century, second an observer of the history of the nineteenth century. Unless you can ask yourself to give up all prejudices you have towards historical records, that is to say, to give up the role of being a 'modern person', and do not interfere with and obstruct the progression of this lively historical process in any way, you will be in great danger."

"What danger?" Tien Mama put down her eyeglasses, and fixed her eyes at the little red light.

"Perhaps we can never go back to the 80's of the twentieth century on the time-axis."

「你們進入了歷史之中，就擁有了兩種角色，第一是原先二十世紀『現代人』的身分，第二就是十九世紀現實歷史的觀察者。除非你們先能要求自己，放棄一切對歷史記載所懷抱的成見，也就是說，放棄做一個『現代人』的身分，不可以用任何方式干擾、阻礙這個活生生的歷史過程的進行，否則，我們都會碰到非常大的危險。」

「甚麼危險？」田媽媽摘下了她的老花眼鏡，盯住小紅球。「也許我們就永遠不能回到二十世紀的八十年代那個時間軸的新原點上去了。」 (39)

In this passage, we can see that the piece of history around the time of late Qing, shortly before the outbreak of the war, has its own horizon out of which the historical text speaks. But the four people also have their own horizons, which is the chain of past interpretations through which the preunderstandings of these interpreters are linked with the text. Two different yet related horizons thus come together. As the little red light comments, if they use their horizons to look at, to frame, to influence or even interfere with the past, they will face the danger of not being able to go back to their era and will become part of history. However, it also remarks in another place of the story that they cannot avoid interfering and have actually interfered with history (51 & 190). Merely by being there, by

knowing the people, they have intervened into the history of the nineteenth century. Hence, a tension is created between the four's being drawn to history on the one hand and the critical need to stay nonchalant to their own pre-understandings on the other. I am going to argue, however, that it is exactly this tension, this moment of negativity that engenders the process of interpretation in which the four people begin to test the legitimacy of their prejudices. As Gadamer argues, "The hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension by attempting a naive assimilation of the two but in consciously bringing it out" (1975:306). The example of Tien Mama, who is the one among the four modern Taiwanese who tries hard to make sense of what is going on, helps me explain this. Let us look at one of her comments in the middle of her journey,

Without coming to this place, how can I ever know that there are so many different opinions among people involved in this Sino-Franco War? They are all real people. No matter Chinese, French, Vietnamese, they just want to live happily and proudly thereafter. The more I come into contact with these real people, the more I feel scared of interfering with the development of history. People living in an advanced society and those living in an ancient society are the same. They cannot avoid having prejudices, avoid requiring other people to think and act like them...

不來走一趟，怎麼會知道牽涉在這場中法戰爭裏的人們有這麼多不同的想法和做法，他們都是活生生的人，中國人也好、法國人也好、越南人也好，都想快樂、驕傲地活下去。當我越接觸這些活生生的人，就越是怕自己不小心觸犯了歷史的發展。畢竟活在一個進步社會的人和一個古老社會裏的人一樣，免不了有成見，免不了要讓別人和自己有相同的想法和做法。(98)

What she observes is that everyone, no matter of what nationality and to what era they belong, has his or her own prejudices. They have their

own special ways to look at things, which they expect agreement and acceptance of other people. Tien herself has her own horizon. She feels very strongly that the Chinese are being exploited and victimized. She even admits that this is "a deep-rooted opinion, moreover there are evidences" (一個根深蒂固的觀點，而且有事實的證據) (74). So she has a rather bitter relationship with the French nun who helps the Chinese but who at the same time discriminates against them. However, she knows very well that she needs to keep herself distant, and needs to listen and be open to the many different voices of others. She is willing to sympathize with the French nun who comes to China really with a mission to love and enlighten the people. Tien Mama is willing to appreciate that she

has worked for quite a long period of time in hardship in China. There must also be a very long conflict between her religious ideals and the social reality. In the end those intentions of "saving the world" and "salvation" just collapse.

一定辛辛苦苦地在中國經營了不少日子，她的宗教理想和社會現實之間也一定面臨相當長久的衝突，到頭來那些「濟世」、「救贖」的初衷還是土崩瓦解了。
(74)

So when the nun accuses the Chinese of being the culprit of the war, she is willing to drop her argument, since "she knows this is not a time for rebuttal" (她知道這不是該嚴詞抗辯的時候。)(74). Instead, she says gently, "Battles are the results of human misunderstandings. And these results will only lead to more misunderstandings" (戰爭是人類互相誤會的結果，而這結果只會變成更大更深的誤會！)(74-75). To me, she has tried to consider the feelings and prejudices of others in order that she can attain "a higher

universality that overcomes not only our own particularity, but also that of the other" (Gadamer 1975:271-272). Later, when she comes to reflect on issues on human civilization, she has this conclusion,

If the Sino-Franco War over Vietnam is just a blind and silly struggle of power and interests, the two world wars following are not much different. The fact that muslims, hindus, believers of Buddha and the people of the Lord have been exploiting each other in every way after the twentieth century is definitely more bloody than the "mild discrimination" of Director Jeantiere.

中法越南之仗如果是一場盲目愚蠢的權、利鬥爭，那麼，後來的兩次世界大戰和這場戰役在本質上也沒甚麼差別；回教徒、印度教徒、佛祖的信仰者和天主的子民在二十世紀中期以後用種種方式彼此侵略的事實，顯然要比尚達兒院長那「溫和的歧視」要血腥得多。(121-122)

Tien Mama is willing to allow changes to be made to her own attitudes/ prejudices towards the French nun, in admitting that various kinds of people have actually been fighting and exploiting each other in a way which is more brutal than her mild discrimination. The crux of the issue, then, lies in whether, as Tien says, "we have the ability to sympathize with others" (我們有沒有能力同情別人) (121), and not whether we can find ways to get out of the story to judge as a rational outsider to convince others of our claims, since everyone of us is basically constituted by our prejudices, our historicity. We need to be truly open and let the being of the text speak to us, have a dialogical relationship with our horizon. We are involved into it, rather than standing above it, judging it with pure reason from without, in order that we can be open to the questioning of the being of the text, which helps us review our prejudices. In this connection, an interpretation animated by fore-meanings is indeed valuable in situating us in the world of

the text. As Gadamer says, "A person who has no horizon does not see far enough and hence over-values what is nearest to him. On the other hand, 'to have a horizon' means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond" (1975:302).

In Tien's process of seeking understanding, the four light balls have played the role of an influential shaping force. Their playful character has above everything else helped change the way Tien looks at history and at other people. Let us look at how the little red light introduce themselves to Tien at the beginning of the novel,

We come from a place which is very, very far away, where there is no time and space. In the words from your books, it is called the "counter-universe". Our people cannot tolerate the great boredom, so have developed elsewhere group by group...Everyday we use a little time to absorb the various of knowledge kept here [the library]. It is very interesting, and we have almost finished reading. My partners and I have decided: we will not disturb you anymore. We will be leaving this place, and going to another time-slot in history along the time-axis. There are a hundred years between every station we visit. I think we will not spend too much time in each station. But real experience is definitely more interesting, isn't it?

我們是從很遠很遠的地方來的，那裏沒有時間，沒有空間，用你們書上的話說，叫做「反宇宙」。我們的族人實在悶得受不了，開始一批一批地向外發展，我們每天利用一小段時間，很快地吸收你們這裏所收藏的各種知識，很有趣，現在差不多都看完了。我和我的同伴已經決定：今後不再打擾你們，我們準備離開這裏，沿著時間軸，到歷史的另一個段落裏去。每一站隔一百年，我想停留在每一站的時間不會太久，可是實地的經驗一定更有趣。是嗎？

(20)

In this short introduction, their character as being frisky already catches our attention. They travel on the time axis only to escape boredom and to make fun. Like Tien, they like to read a lot of books. But unlike her,

they are looking more for fun than for knowledge. Moreover, they find great enjoyment in real experience, expecting more fun from it than from books. This aspiration of going into the actual context of historical events, however, has put these four light balls in a paradox. On the one hand, they know very clearly that they are not to hinder the progression of history, and not to distort the time-axis. But on the other hand, we always find them trying to do something. Their bringing four people from one time-slot to another is in the first instance an interference with history. What is more, in one of their discussion about whether they should save people injured in the war, we hear the little purple light declaring: "It doesn't matter saving one person...If it does matter, I will say it is quite meaningful. What will a twisted time-axis be like?" (「救一個人沒甚麼關係吧？」小紫球說：「要是真有關係，我倒覺得蠻有意思的。一根歪了的時間軸會是甚麼樣子呢？」) (207)

Instead of complying with the strict regulations of the time-axis, we find the little purple light searching for the possibility to respond to the situation, because it sees that "there are many loopholes in history. If they are not recorded, there will not be any contradictions" (歷史上有很多漏洞的，反正只要後來沒有記錄，就不會有甚麼了不起的矛盾。) (222). The experience of the four light balls demonstrates a dialectical relationship between on the one hand, a universal progression of history that cannot be interfered, and on the other, contingencies of particular historical moments. In the universe of the time-axis, they are entering into specific historical moments, and doing what the situation requires.

I have been using the word playful to describe their behaviour because it really characterizes the way they deal with things. By play, in

fact I am referring to Gadamer's conception of "the mode of being" of the text we are seeking to understand, in which the interpreter loses himself/herself (1975:102). What this means is that the players are not merely subjects or spectators standing over and against what is objective and what exists as such. On the contrary, we participate, as the four light balls, in the text we encounter to such an extent that the play has its own rhythm, its own buoyancy, and its own distinctive to-and-fro movement, "which is not tied to any goal which would bring it to an end" (ibid 103). It is this to-and-fro movement which explains the complexity of history, the dialectical relationship between the universal and the particular. Being "playful" is not equivalent to being insincere, for "play itself contains its own, even sacred, seriousness" (ibid 102). The four light balls are really trying to save people. It is just that they are being "thrown" into a situation in which they find themselves in a dialectical and dialogical relation with the text, in which they respond to the contingency of the situation.

This dialectical free play exerts an influence on Tien who gradually comes to understand that she is situated in her encounter with the historical text. Tien, our librarian, who used to insist upon "the fact, the truth and the totality" (149), now understands that she cannot look at history from an outsider point of view, expecting the total knowledge of facts. Stepping into real historical moments, she no longer treats the past as a mere object she can study from books. On the contrary, she feels herself deeply absorbed, "I just know that I care no more about whether I can go back to the society of the 80's in the twentieth century" (我只知道現在我不太關心自己是不是能再回到二十世紀八十年代的社會去。) (113). She is responding to the particularity

of the situation, and not to the knowledge from books. Tien's attitude can be attributed to her willingness to take up a position within the historicity of history itself, in order to "locate the historiographical meaning of a phenomenon in the whole of its historical self-consciousness" (Gadamer 1975:299). She finds herself being drawn to these real historical moments, at the risk of interfering with the course of history and of not being able to return to her own society. This willingness can be viewed as an acceptance of the intrinsic historicity of human existence, and a compelling urge to involve oneself in it. As Gadamer would say, understanding is not so much an activity performed by a "subject" as it is the very being of the subject, something, therefore, which the subject undergoes. Ricoeur comes closer in hammering against the point, "To understand is not to project oneself into the text but to expose oneself to it; it is to receive a self enlarged by the appropriation of the proposed worlds which interpretation unfolds" (1981:94).

Exposing oneself to a text implies a giving up, or a transcending of the subject-object paradigm to a subject-subject paradigm of understanding. This means that we are letting go of our overarching right as a sovereign interpreting subject over a fixed text, and admit that there are things which lie beyond our usual schema of understanding. This, in turn, implies that we appreciate the contingency and historicity which entail every encounter with changing circumstances. Reason, in this actual encounter with the historical text, is not being put away but contextualized. Far from being undermined, it is emancipated from formalized rules and becomes a more flexible faculty of application, through a dialectic of being employed and

negated. Tien Mama, we can see, is employing her reasoned judgement all along in her encounter with historical events and with the French nun. But she is willing to put down her usual reasoning about how the West victimizes the Chinese in order that she can come up with a fairer judgement towards the French nun. This flexible use of the faculty of human reason leads us to "an openness toward what cannot be encompassed, where we lose our breath and are stopped in our tracks, at least momentarily, for it always belongs to our condition to remain on the way" (Caputo 214). Reason, as shown in the experience of Tien and the four light balls, functions for us in a moment of free play, where it is exposed to "its *other*, to the thinking which has the boldness and the audacity not to demand reasons--rather the way one learns to float only by surrendering every attempt to swim and by remaining perfectly still" (ibid 224). Gadamer calls this hermeneutic form of reasoning, which works in concrete situation, *phronesis*, or practical wisdom. As he puts it, "by contrast, the subject of ethical reason, of *phronesis*, man always finds himself in an 'acting situation' and he is always obliged to use ethical knowledge and apply it according to the exigencies of his concrete situation" (1987:120). As opposed to instrumental rationality which aims at a "knowledge directed to the power of making, a knowing mastery of nature", this practical reasoning "means not only the making of whatever one can make; it is also choice and decision between possibilities" (1977:532). Better still, "[i]t concerns the making of responsible political and practical decisions about happiness, health, peace, freedom and other stable factors of human-being-in-nature" (1975a:313). What Tien and the four light balls have done is exactly

an expanding of possibilities of understanding the historical situation, and a making of decisions which will bring happiness and justice to other people.

Underneath the notions of practical reason and of an open encounter with the historical text, we see an intention of Chang to challenge the official writing of history. By putting four people into a real historical moment which emphasizes the contingency and historicity of the encounter, Chang is indeed trying to say that understanding should be regarded as an event which operates in the form of a dialogue, rather than a passive reading of a formal text. The fusion of horizons between the text and the interpreters produce new understandings of the event. From this perspective, "the true historical object is not an object at all, but the unity of one and the other, a relationship in which exist both the reality of history and the reality of historical understanding" (Gadamer 1975:291). In other words, *Shih-chien Chu* is asserting that there is no one discourse which can claim legitimacy in the interpretation of history. Chang's revision of the piece of history shortly before the outbreak of the war, thus has the significance of first liberating historically inscribed meanings of events and persons and second of locating them back to a living historical tradition. It parodies historical records by fictional elements, playing upon the truths and lies of historical records. We have seen earlier that the presence of the four of them has actually changed the course of events which has taken place, the most important consequence of which is the acceleration of the outbreak of the war. Another major change which deserves our attention is how those nineteenth century people change the way they look at things and at themselves. Chang is playing upon historical events and personages, not in an attempt to make a fool of

them, but to deconstruct the way they have usually been understood. This change can be most significantly witnessed in Chi Ta-hsia 紀大俠, who is first presented to us as the typical Chinese chivalrous hero,

A hero who is a cynic but very kindhearted. It is said that he has a great inheritance. He only like spears and lances. He has acquired very good kung-fu, but calls himself "Thief Chi". He is trying to find out the person who killed his father, while at the same time robbing the bad rich men and thieves. He is not an official, but is more fabulous than an official.

一個玩世不恭，卻心腸很好的俠士，傳說他家有萬貫祖產，只喜歡刺槍弄棒，學了一身好功夫，卻自稱「紀賊」，一面四出尋訪殺父仇人，一面到處劫殺一些爲富不仁的豪門劣紳，和山寇土匪，他不作官，卻比官還威風。(48)

Straight, carefree, always believing in himself, always willing to help, are what characterize Chi. However, as he comes to know our four characters and the four light balls, we begin to see some changes in him. First, we have the little green light challenging him for what he has always taken pride in doing: fighting and killing. This challenge touches upon a soft spot in his heart which brings up a series of reflection in him,

He used to pride himself for being a hero, for killing people in order to save people. But then he cannot help thinking: the original intention to "save people" is now blurred. Who does he save? What abilities does he have such that he think he can save people? What is more realistic, is that the little green light asks him a very important question: do you know the people you want to save and kill?

他一直以身爲當代大俠而自傲，爲了救人也曾殺人——有時候爲了救一個人甚至會殺一群人。然而他也不得不想起：原先那個「救人」的目的到了後來好像變得很模糊了。究竟他救了誰？他又憑甚麼認爲自己能救得了人呢？更現實的是，小綠球提醒他一個很重要的問題：你認識你想救的和想殺的人嗎？

The very profession of a ta-hsia, which both he and the others believe in, is called into question. But what is even more unexpected is he even comes to feel unsure of his appearance, which is not usual of a ta-hsia. He mistakes Ah Chen the thief, as a ta-hsia like him and comes to admire Ah Chen's carelessness about his appearance and is overcome with a feeling of shame about how he makes himself up (133). These changes shatter the traditional image of a Chinese hero. However, they prepare him for a transformed understanding of himself. The following paragraph will serve to show how it takes place,

Chi sees clearly the implication behind this repositioning movement--he finds that the world that human beings inhabit is so very small. Thousands of French soldiers who besiege the city seem like rows and rows of ants crowded together. And the thing about his position is that it is not just high, it is in fact enormous. Chi I-chih suddenly finds that the path through which he is flying is not just above the soldiers, it is also over every corner around them. The little green light leads him into the centre of the war and the scenes behind, in order to let him know that all this killing is just a little game, a game which can be broken up in a minute. A great whirling! He seems to see that he has become every soldier that is fighting in this war, hacking, whipping, and shooting another self.

紀一澤清楚看見這一場位移運動背後的意義——他發現人類原本立足的世界竟然可以如北渺少。數千名法國圍城的大軍猶如一排排密密匝匝的螻蛄，而他自己所處身的位置不只是高，而且巨大！紀一澤忽然發現他飄昇飛翔的路途不只在那群戰士的上方，也在他們的周圍任何一個角落。綠光導引著他進入戰場的核心以及幕後，讓他徹底洞悉這樣的殺戮其實只是一種小小的遊戲，一種可以被天地巨靈在彈指之間粉碎的遊戲。一陣天旋地轉，他彷彿看見自己化身成每一個戰鬥中的士卒，自己在砍殺、鞭殺、射殺著另一個自己。

(186-187)

Literally, this "repositioning movement" refers to his physical

transference from the ground level to the air. But figuratively, it means a transference from his position of a ta-hsia to one which is not limited by his own profession. From there he can now see that what he has all along been doing is just a little game, since he is just killing "another self". He used to look at himself so seriously, so righteously. But now he finds that all this seriousness and righteousness has gone. It is no wonder then, that when he sees the four people and the four light balls being carried away back to the time-tunnel at the end of the story, he makes a decision to let go of the things that he once insisted,

a hero is left pondering in the forests. He starts to reflect about the sentiments in his life that he has never caught and will never grasp. He exclaims, "Is it real? Illusory? True? False?" He murmurs, and begins to forget the things that he has once insisted.

留下一個俠客怔忡在山林之下，開始思索著他生命中從未捕捉到、以及再也捕捉不到的情愫，重重地歎了一口氣，「真耶？幻耶？是也？非也？」他吟念著，並且開始遺忘自己曾經堅持過的一些事物。(227)

Finally, he decides to go into his forgetfulness. What Chang presents to us here, is, in actual fact, a kind of hermeneutic-historical consciousness, which is an attempt at "an act of recollection which remembers to forget; that is, it remembers to overcome the conditions which victimize individuals" (Alejandro 97-98). If we read this paragraph together with the paragraph which was just previously quoted, we will find that Chi is undertaking a very bold attempt to forget the things he once believed in and cherished, in order that he can be released from his affixed position to one which allows him a *collective* vision of his deeds. It implies that he

recognizes that he has to understand the world and understand himself through others. He finds that he needs to locate himself in a tradition which is collectively shared by others. Thus Chang, through the character of Chi, is investigating our amnesia through a retrieval of our historicity, which is "the *collective* appropriation of a set of practices as historical" (J.M. Bernstein 119).³ It can be explained by Gadamer's idea of conversation as the paradigm of understanding,

The hermeneutical turn toward "conversation" that I have pursued not only seeks in some sense to go back before the dialectic of German idealism, namely, to Platonic dialectic, but it also aims even farther back before this Socratic-dialogical turn to its presupposition: the *anamnesis* sought for and awakened in *logoi*. The "recollection" that I have in mind is derived from myth and yet is in the highest rational. It is not only that of the individual soul but always that of "the spirit that would like to unite us"--we who are a conversation. (1989:110)

"We are a conversation" is the message. It makes us aware of our bonds to others, and these bonds will find their way back, transforming our opinions and even our identity. What *Shih Chien Chu* shows us is that we are always situated in our tradition, a tradition which is shared by others. We are indeed conversing with it as we are trying to understand and to interpret. This requires, as we see in Chi and in Tien, a giving up of our faculty of reason as a universal principle of judgement and of our memory of the things we personally insist. This foregoing indeed signals a deliberate

³italics mine.

attempt to forget about our being harnessed within the web of ideological interpellation through historical discourses.

Shih Chien-chu demonstrates a keen awareness that it is the writing of history that is "constitutive of the historical mode of understanding" (Ricoeur 1984a:162). So by juxtaposing the writing of history and the writing of fiction it denies the truth claims of the former and asserts that both are indeed human constructs and signifying systems. It then opens up a site of struggle through which the subjectivity of the human agents is problematized. Just like the four people and the four light balls who travel on the time-axis, we always find ourselves situated in the tension between our being drawn to tradition and the need to keep a distance. This helps me conceptualize a notion of hermeneutic citizenship, in which citizens are always interpreters of traditions and social practices. They are subjects rooted in a historical situation, who are part of a community, and who need to be engaged in a dialogical relation with their surrounding circumstances. I am not sure whether Chang has the idea of Gadamer's "inbetweenness" in mind when he wrote the book. Still, let me quote this from Gadamer, in an attempt to conclude what *Shih-chien Chu* has achieved. By reminding us of our being situated in an inbetweenness between historical traditions and the present, it mediates our dialogue with history,

The place between strangeness and familiarity, that what has been handed down [die Überlieferung] has for us, is that "between" [das Zwischen] between the historically intended distant objectivity and the belongingness to a tradition [Tradition]. The true home of hermeneutics is in this "between". (1975:262-263)

Chapter Three

Private Life in the Public Sphere *Wo Mei-mei* as Metafiction

Literature in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* plays an important role in preparing the institutional grounding of the political public sphere. It serves to facilitate a discussion about selfhood and subjectivity and constitutes participants' "fictitious identity" as "human beings pure and simple" (89:56). As Habermas says, "the humanity of the literary public sphere served to increase the effectiveness of the public sphere in the political realm" (ibid). In this chapter, we will be looking at an autobiographical work of Chang Ta-chun, *Wo Mei-mei* 我妹妹 [My Little Sister] to see how literature mediates the communication between human subjects with themselves. Under this issue we can further locate other points of significance such as the politicization of everyday life, the function of memories in one's attempt at an account of one's life history, and finally the ideal of a communicative citizen who is saved from the "dividing practices" of language from the self and others (Foucault 82:777).

First, I think it is necessary to review very briefly the concept of communication in the Habermasian public sphere and the assumptions he entertains about language as a medium for rational discourse. To sustain his construction of the public sphere, he develops *The Theory of Communicative Action* in which he explores the interrelations between the conditions of rational action and the conditions of social rationalization. Social reality is constructed through what Habermas calls communicatively rational action,

or communication between participants attempting to reach consensus. An understanding of societal evolution can be gained by understanding how social reality is constructed through consensus building.

Communication, according to Habermas, is inherently oriented towards mutual understanding, and the standards that govern communication are therefore ideally conditioned by rational consensus (1979:3). Habermas conceives of three fundamental types of valid rational consensus, corresponding to the three basic ways in which a communicative act can be claimed to be valid. These validity claims are truth, normative validity and sincerity (ibid 28). A speaker may raise the claim that the statement is true (or the existential presuppositions are satisfied); the speech-act is correct in terms of the prevailing normative context (or the normative context itself is legitimate); or that the speaker is sincere in what he or she says. These validity claims are implicit in the everyday acts of speaking (what he means by universal pragmatics). To be capable of communicatively rational action is to be well-versed in the use and defense of validity claims. Through the defense and use of these claims, the socialization aspect of communicative action can be achieved which serves the formation of personal identities.

Habermas introduces the concept of lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) as a correlate of the concept of communicative action. The lifeworld, as is suggested in phenomenology, is the taken-for-granted universe of daily social activity. It preserves and transmits the interpretive work of preceding generations and forms a symbolic space within which cultural traditions, social integration and personal identity are sustained and reproduced. Habermas believes that through communicative action, the lifeworld, a

communicatively integrated action sphere, can occur independently of dominations by relations of power. However, an inner colonization of this lifeworld will result "if the communicative rationality of cultural modernity is rashly equated with the functionalist rationality of self-maintaining economic and administrative action systems" (1987:396).

Indeed, communicative action to Habermas provides an alternative to money and power as a basis for societal integration, as he sees that the advent of mass culture displaces his hope of realizing a public sphere. So, in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, we see Habermas shifts his attention from a historical and institutional basis of public communication to the transhistorical capacity of human communication. As a result, his conception of the public sphere, which is originally a basis for applying reason to politics, becomes a product of communicative action. For Habermas, the hope of the project of modernity lies in "the articulation of a mode of rationality freed from structures of power" (Mumby 89).

In this world of ever-changing communicative practices, however, the possibility of a communicative rationality that is freed from structures of power is very much to be doubted. As *Wo Mei-mei* shows, communication between people can hardly be assessed solely through the three validity claims. The formation of personal identity then at the same time cannot be totally independent from structures of domination. The weakness of Habermas's model of communicative action is that it requires language be free of force and domination. However, as we have seen in previous chapters, language develops in conjunction with historical and institutional practices, and thus is pregnant with traditional values and forces.

Accordingly, there will not be any universal notion of truth through which we can judge the validity of another person's speech. Another point is, he neglects "all other forms of communication not directed toward consensus" (Garnham 360). Communicative practices, as shown in *Wo Mei-mei*, are tools of domination and exploitation, rather than the media through which universal truths are expressed and common understanding sought. Sincerity in communication can scarcely be measured. As a result, it needs to be recognized that any description of the speech act must be dealt with amidst the background of the whole social matrix of institutions and practices. As Shrag has argued, "in speaking, the system of linguistic rules slides into history and then returns bearing historical inscriptions" (36). Therefore, it is my intention in this chapter to read *Wo Mei-mei* as an interpretive journey of the narrator to understand himself and the world, not just through communicative action, but through the wider sphere of *communicative praxis*, which is what Calvin O. Shrag calls a holistic space which "involves not only the texts of spoken and written discourse but also concrete actions of individuals and the historically effective life of institutions" (24). I hope this exercise will help me see how language can be resumed as a medium of understanding, both in the sense of the understanding of the self and the understanding of others.

But why do we have to look at autobiographical discourse? First, it is because the author in autobiographical discourse is at once writer and reader. This genre thus problematizes the relation between the subject and the object, or the "I" which tries to come to grips with the "me", especially the past "me", the human agent with a degree of free will and ability to act,

and the world or society which is considered to be overarchingly omnipotent in its control over individuals through interpellation within a circumscribed discursive space. Moreover, the self-reflexive moments in the autobiographical text provide a direct commentary on the problematical relationship between the writer, readers, writing and real life. I view *Wo Mei-mei* as what Patricia Waugh calls metafiction, that is, "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about relationship between fiction and reality" (2). Indeed, Chang always evokes his status as a public writer in the book, citing important texts and sarcastically calling himself "the awaited new comet in literature" (文壇可期待的新彗星) (85), in an attempt to undermine the distinction between his public role as a writer and his private role as a son and a brother. Hence, it serves to show the changes incurred on the institution of the literary public sphere.

Wo Mei-mei is a recounting of the narrator's memory about his and his little sister's life history. Right from the beginning, it demonstrates that "the web of facticity that situates our communicative praxis is penetrated by recollective thinking" (Shrag 72). Under this attempt, we see an intense awareness of the narrator about how language is constituted through male-dominated ideology and how it in turn constitutes the way he understands himself and others. He also feels a great unease at the power of the male sex in using language as a tool of exploitation against the opposite sex. Above all, he finds that the profession of writing has unexpectedly separated his public self from his private self. Facing his many "mes" as a son, a brother and a writer, he resorts to a narration of his family history in an attempt to

render a new understanding of himself. The novel, seen in this light, is not just a passive reflection of the narrator's own past but an exercise in transgressing the representative space of language, in order to deliver himself from ideological interpellation and to resituate himself in the wider space of communicative praxis. The history of the family offers a suitable place for him to engage in his reflection, because, as Gadamer remarks, "long before we understand ourselves through the processes of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and the state in which we live" (1975:276). A recounting of the familial experience thus culminates in an attempt to examine the historical reality of one's own being. Moreover, it will serve to put the narrator's private life in the public sphere, thus displacing the boundary that writing creates between his private and public selves.

With an awareness about the values and forces of domination embedded in language, our narrator, Ta Tou-chun 大頭春, sets out to examine the way language is used at home. What he finds is abhorring. The men in the house have been using their power of speech to dominate the women. Just like grandpa, the priest. At home, he always gets the upperhand in speaking. When the little sister was born, he gave a little, yet well-spoken account explaining why he decided on such and such a name for the little girl. When grandma got impatient with his narration and tried to interrupt, he just stopped her shortly, saying "What are you so anxious for?" (你急甚麼?) (15) These everyday happenings, however trivial on their own, serve to inform the two youngsters of the domineering power of grandpa in the house. Grandma, on the other hand, is deprived of her power

to speak and always remains a listener. She even fails to describe her own recipe despite the fact that she is an excellent cook. Ta Tou-chun comments,

the reason why the absolute majority of the women in my grandma's generation fail to be famous cooks is not because they cannot make good dishes. Rather, it is because they never have the chance to describe what they have been doing, and how they do it. They have lost their power to narrate .

我奶奶那一輩的女人絕大多數當不了名廚並不是因為她們的菜燒得不好，而是她們從來沒有機會描述她們做了些甚麼、以及怎麼做的。她們失去了訴說的能力。
(122)

The situation is at least equally, if not more, severe in the case of Ta Tou-chun's own parents, which would show succinctly why the female has lost their ability to speech. His mother, a medical-student-turned-housewife, quitted her studies after witnessing a coach accident. The father, who was a reporter, learned from her an abundance of medical knowledge enough for him to write on the daily paper. What the mother did everyday, then, was providing him with information and then collecting the newspaper clippings (53). Even after her husband has stopped writing on the paper, she continues keeping a copy of the things that she thinks he has written. Moreover, the father even uses his knowledge on Freud to conduct medical inquiries on her. He treats her as an object of study, so professionally, that she believes that she is ill. She tells her children, "I am sick. Don't take any photographs of me. I'm really sick--*go ask your father if you don't believe that*. No photographs" 「我有病，你們不要拍我。我真地有病 — 不信去問爸爸；不能拍照。」 (126).¹ All along, Ta Tou-chun witnesses in silence

¹italics mine.

how his father questions her. He painfully discovers that "speaking is a very horrible power. It can turn the truth of things clear or obscure, strong or weak, right or wrong" (「訴說」是一種可佈的能力。它能使事情的真相變清楚、也變模糊，變強、也變弱，變對、也變錯。)(126-127).

The ability to speak, to master language, gives the speaker a position which is powerful and self-constituting. Benveniste's remark that "it is in and through language that *man* constitutes himself as a subject, because language alone establishes the concept of 'ego' in reality, in its reality which is that of being" ironically serves to explain the situation here, because it is the male sex that got their domineering power through speaking (224).² This self-constituency of the position of the male speakers in the house is predicated upon the silence, or making-silence of the wives. The fact that Ta Tou-chun's grandpa and father use their knowledge on religion and psychology to exploit their wives also demonstrates that the power of the speaking subject produces and is predicated upon knowledge. Foucault's study of the geneology of power in his project on the prison coincidentally applies very appropriately here, "that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (1979:27-28). These power relations, moreover, do not have their limits in the house. Communication between the two couples also shows how it constitutes in the

²italic mine.

production and reproduction of power relations in the public sphere of the society. Men who have the power to speech in private have the same access in the public. Even in the church, grandpa and grandma still respectively play the roles of a speaker and a listener. When grandpa uses his priestly knowledge to speak, to condemn the anger of the roarings of women, grandma, "not feeling the slightest touch of sarcasm, nods her head attentively, submissively, and with a humble smile, deeply convinced" (並不覺得她被諷刺了甚麼；她祇是專注地、馴服地、帶著極其謙和的微笑地點著頭，深深以爲然似地。) (165). She is totally insensitive to the implicated meanings of language. Ta Tou-chun's father is at leastly equally, if not more, capable. In the end of the fiction, he, accompanied by his mistress, holds his personal paintings exhibition. Ta Tou-chun and his little sister go there, and in an attempt to embarrass the father, announce that their mother has gone mad. Ta Tou-chun writes that his father, though stunned, does not let go of his power to speech,

at least he still remembers to take the microphone, holds it like an addicted singer, and utters a few words sorrowfully, powerless yet filled with true sentiments, 'You, have gone mad?'

至少他還記得接過麥克風來，像一個痴迷的歌手那樣握住，哀悽地說了二個字，無力，但是充滿真實的情感：「你，瘋了？」 (175)

For the men, we can see that speaking is something that is "most characteristic of human actions, pursued incessantly both in public and in private, in wakefulness and in sleep" (Madison 160). Communication in the case of the two couples becomes just a form of "social or political practice"

of exploitation or domination (Mumby 97) and can scarcely be judged by Habermas's validity claims. It is not used for achieving mutual understanding. Moreover, we find it difficult to measure any truth claims because language, as Ta Tou-chun find, has the ability to manipulate the so-called truth. Further, we fail to see any sincerity expressed, except will to domination, fear and obedience. Rather than producing a public sphere in which everyone is equal, communication between the two sexes produces a public sphere of men and a private sphere in which all differences between the sexes are foregrounded.

Facing all this, Ta Tou-chun learns from his sister the resistant strategy of silence. There is the following description about her when she was still a child,

Her silence was in fact a very powerful state. She didn't speak, but we had no way to prove whether she really couldn't speak or just didn't want to speak. On the contrary adults like us, yes, adults--at that time I was between nine and ten--could always felt that it was because of a kind of contempt that she didn't speak.

她的沉默其實是非常有力氣的一種狀態，她不會說話，可是我們沒有辦法證明她是真地不會、或者祇是不願意說話。反而我們這些大人——是的，大人，那時我在九、十歲之間；經常可以感覺到她不把話說出來乃是緣於一種輕蔑。

(28)

Why is silence a kind of contempt? And why is it so powerful? Perhaps we can get a clue from here. At a later point of the story, Ta Tou-chun says, "I have a normal sister. She can speak, can listen, and can use these two kinds of abilities to help her realize how crazy and unfair the world is to her, even after a long long time" (我有了個正常的妹妹；她能說、能聽，而且一直到很久很久以後，還能讓這兩種能力幫助自己認識整個世界對她而言

是多麼地瘋狂、多麼地不公平。)(34). Speaking, as Ta Tou-chun and his little sister discover, is a way men secure their domination over women. However, the unwanted truth is that the two of them are required to speak in a way their parents do. If the little sister does not speak, she will be considered abnormal. We can feel the sarcasm here when Ta Tou-chun says the family finally finds that the little baby is normal. Being normal to the adults is being obedient to their teachings. The adults abhor abnormality because it signals contempt or resistance. Silence then, is for the little sister a powerful tool to refuse compliance to conventional practices. It is "that inviolable dimension to which the individual can turn when he wants to defend his privacy and inwardness without any reference to the public realm" (Alejandro 76).

These reflections, however, do not take place only on the part of Ta Tou-chun as a son, a brother, but also at the level at which he is a public writer. The problem of speaking and listening in the house is in fact intertwined with his reflection on the problem he sees in his writing and in the delicate relationship between language and reality. Indeed, his public role as a writer propels him to look at the differences he has from his own mother. He finds that, as mentioned earlier, when death silences his mother, it teaches him how to tell stories (144). And when his mother never appeals to writing to express her feelings, he is used to using words to translate life or anything which may even not exist in real life,

the voices she hears, the scenes she sees, the emotions she feels, the things she senses, are essences of reality that press towards everyday life so truly, so bloodily. These things are too real, and can not survive the translation of words. And the I who am used to

translating life or things which may not exist in life through words, cannot survive the scrutiny of my little sister.

那些她聽到的聲音、她看到的景象、她感受到的情緒、她意識到的事物是活生生、血淋淋逼迫日常生活裡來的現實本質；這樣的東西太實在，實在得經不起文字的翻譯。而習慣了用文字去翻譯生活或生活中根本不存在的東西的我，則經不起我妹妹的逼視。(89)

From the days he is a little boy, he has the habit of putting everything he sees, everything he imagines into writing. He seems to have acquired the power of the male sex in their powerful grasp of language. He even discovers that the way he writes is just like the way grandpa and his father use language in dominating their wives. He admits that he has "the kind of selfish, knifelike jealousy that belongs uniquely to adult men" (成年男人那種獨特的、自私的、充滿利刃般嫉妒之意的情感) (166). From the time he began to write he already knew how to "cut the meat" (切肉)--

mixing people's experience, words, my feelings, illusions and the knowledge that seems full of wisdom. Cutting, cutting, cutting; frying, frying, frying, producing a dish hidden with anger and hatred. A strong-smelling holy meal filled with jealousy.

把人們的經驗、話語、我的感受、幻覺和那些看來頗有智慧的知識攪和在一起，切切切，妙妙妙，端出一盤隱藏了怒意和惡意的菜餚；一種葷食性的、絕對充滿嫉妒之情的聖餐。(167)

Writing in this case, as he has to admit, could be a horribly powerful weapon. Just like speaking, it could be used to exploit people. We can say, in a sharp contrast to Habermas's ideal, that far from being independent from structures of power, the lifeworld of Ta Tou-chun is colonized by forms of relations of dominations. And language, far from bringing him self-understanding, has made things confusing to him. It is no wonder then,

that when his sister, usually his first and closest reader, asks him why he has to write and why he has to include his family members and friends into his works, he finds it just difficult to explain,

She asked me in the roarings of the wind, "Did you put anybody into this fiction?"

"Shen Chia-te?" I asked, "Do you mean Shen Chia-te?"

To a kid who has just begun her second grade in high school, how would you be able to make clear things about fiction, creation, materials, fabrication and realism? I can even not articulate that clearly to the me who will soon be graduating from university. "Of course not," I immediately argued with myself.

她在獵獵的風聲中問我：「你是不是把甚麼人寫進這個小說裡來了？」

「沈家德嗎？」我說：「你的意思是沈家德嗎？」

跟一個剛唸國二的小鬼，你怎麼說得清楚關於小說創作、取材、杜撰、寫實之類之事？我連跟大學快畢業的自己都說不清楚。「當然不是。」我隨即跟自己抗辯。

(88-89)

The fact that he argues with himself immediately hints on the awareness he has that first the relation between language and reality is much more complicated than can be conceived through these works, and second, writing, like speaking, has the power to "turn the truth of things clear or obscure, strong or weak, right or wrong". He cannot comprehend what he is doing and why he is doing these things. Language, instead of being a mediation, divides him from others. He also fails to make connections between his "mes" as a son and a brother who is so sensitive to the damages of language and his "me" as a writer who is ruthlessly exploiting these damages. What troubles him more is that his public role as a writer has set him apart from his private self. At one point when the family psychologist, Dr. Chen, comments that Ta Tou-chun never reveals his true self in his

works, Ta Tou-chun reflects,

However, his comment renders a great blow on me, which I fear is difficult to recover. At least I deeply believe in the saying that I am escaping something. Even though there are a few times when I try to reveal in my works sides in me that cannot face the world, my readers would not believe that those things come from my self-anatomy because it is a novel. They would rather believe that they are my "careful observations towards humanity".

然而他的言論對我撞擊至深，往後恐怕也極難平復。至少我對自己正在逃避著某些事物的這個說法已然堅信不移。即使有好幾次，我努力在作品中暴露自己最不能面對世界的那些部分的時候，我的讀者也往往因為那是小說而不容易輕信那些不堪的內在其實出於我的自剖，他們反而寧可相信我「對人性觀察入微」。

(91)

The institution of literature, criticism and readership aggravates his problem. When he is desperately trying to establish himself as a writer, his private life is being quietly effaced. The medium of language, instead of linking him to the readers, becomes a tool of evasion and concealment upon entering the literary public sphere. Instead of reinforcing his identity, it deprives him of a coherent sense of selfness. Writing constitutes a public space which is not commensurable with his private life.

Facing the many instances of implicit exploitations in his life in both the private and the public realms without knowing how to deal with them, he finally decides to negotiate his unconscious, "I follow the time axis of the story, escaping the self that I do not understand, and imagining that it is my therapy" (我沿著故事的時間軸線一直走下去，逃避著我所不瞭解的自己並假想那就是我的治療。) (96). Instead of trying to reveal everything to the public, he keeps himself a little private space. Instead of searching for a coherent understanding of his self, he gives up inquiring after total knowledge. The

unconscious sets into motion a hermeneutical challenge to the consciousness of the writing subject "as a pure presence, a given datum, and a unity of manifest and transparent intended meanings" (Shrag 175). As such, it opens up a site of struggles around a number of heterogeneous and contradictory positions and identities, through which the subject understands himself and the world. As Ta Tou-chun exclaims, "writing, what an unstable profession" (作家，一個多麼不確定的行業。) (82). It is only through addressing the subject from a multifariousity of positions that writing can be seen as a "public space of intersubjectivity" (Shrag 132), where displayed reference is made to "an intersubjective world of interlocutors and a multilayered world of the text" (ibid 133).

As mentioned, these reflections of the narrator in fact take the form of a recounting from memory about the writer's and the little sister's life. Ironically, what he learns from his sister is the secret power of forgetfulness. Indeed, right at the opening stage of the story, Ta Tou-chun already sets the tone by pointing out "what a bothersome and annoying ability human beings' memory is" (記憶又是多麼令人煩擾的一種能力。) (26). Later, wondering at his sister's amazing capability of forgetting things at will, he says,

I can feel now that my sister's forgetfulness is a certain capability in its own right; she is a human being of another kind and I am afraid I will not understand her a bit more--even if she tells me herself everything about the secret of amnesia.

也祇有在那時候，我才感到我妹妹之健忘是一種境界，她是另外一種人類，我恐怕再也不會瞭解她更多一些——即使她親口告訴我種種關於遺忘的秘密。
(48-49)

Right here we are presented with a "dialectical movement of

remembrance and forgetfulness" (Alejandro 97), because memory, as Gadamer puts it, "must be formed; for memory is not memory for anything and everything. One has a memory for some things, and not for others; one wants to preserve one thing in memory and banish another" (1975:16). It underlies the whole problematics of a deliberate attempt by individuals not to remember their being harnessed within a complex web of ideological interpellation. It is because "only by forgetting does the mind have the possibility of total renewal, the capacity to see everything with fresh eyes, so that what is long familiar fuses with the new into a many leveled unity" (ibid). In this sense, forgetting is closely related to the act of remembering. It is not merely an absence and a lack but, a condition of the life of the mind. This dialectic is also what Shrag calls a hermeneutic "radical reflection that is able to track forgotten memories and distorted motivations in the life of the decentered subject and to discern the opaqueness and concealment that remains embedded in the conversation and social practices of mankind" (175). It characterizes consciousness as a hermeneutic event, displayed as an interpretation of the self and the world.

Through the three pairs of dialectical relationship between memory and forgetfulness, consciousness and unconsciousness, speaking and silence, the narrator seeks to release himself from a position constructed through a gendered language system. These pairs of dialectic can best be explained through Ricoeur's notion of distanciation and appropriation, which mediates our understanding of the self because "the subjectivity of the reader comes to itself only insofar it is placed in suspense, unrealized, potentialized" (1981:144). The narrative voice can only be traced through this back and

forth movement, because our consciousness "can lose its presence, become absent to itself in its forgetfulness, its self-deception, its unmonitored subordination to the play of political power and ideology" (Shrag 175). The ultimate strength of this distancing and reappropriating of the self finally lies in helping the narrator in assuming a position of an active interpreter who can resituate himself/herself in the sphere of communicative praxis rooted in historical moments. Subjectivity finds "its birth certificate within this wider space of communicative praxis, which includes not only language and speech but also action, both individual and social" (Shrag 11). As the sister once tells her brother, "it is only when I walk on and on and on and on and on that I know I exist" (祇有在這樣走走走走走的時候，我知道我活著。) (150). Communication becomes action-oriented here, which shows its priority to what the narrator says at an earlier point that, "most of the time, we speak and at the same time listen to our own voice, which makes it like we have accomplished or practised something" (大部份的時候，我們訴說，並且在訴說的同時聆聽自己的聲音，好像因此便完成了甚麼或實踐了甚麼。) (123). Speaking and listening, in this light, become grossly inadequate. The narrator here makes a point that the subject cannot only be articulated through the discursive sphere of language. It also has to be articulated through the nondiscursive sphere of human practices since action and language constitute "nonreducible twin halves of an undivided history" (Shrag 170-171).

To understand ourselves as agentic beings, at the same time, is to understand ourselves as temporal beings, and this is where the hermeneutics of historicity becomes helpful in our discussion here, "for time is the dimension of action and is meaningful only in terms of action" (Madison 98).

At another point, when the narrator is plagued with the usual demand by every reader and writer of fiction to provide with what happens next at every point of narration, he comes to realize that what everyone is concerned about is time itself, since "we all expect time will come to our rescue, a little satisfaction, a little hope" (我們寄情於時間帶來一點拯救、一點滿足、一點希望。)(96). It is through this that he understands, finally, the meaning of this writing in relation to human life. Indeed, "the common feature of human experience, that which is marked, organized and classified by the fact of storytelling in all its form, is its *temporal character*" (Ricoeur 1983:170). This temporal structure of our experience, in other words, enables the recounting of it. And in this recounting, the human subject expands the possibilities through which he understands himself, and therefore also widens the possible engagements with the world. Hence together with the impulse to walk on and on, it is clear that Chang Ta-chun here subscribes to the idea that "the state of being a 'subject' is best conceived of in something akin to a temporal aspect--the 'subject' as only a moment in a lived life" (Smith 37). Moreover, this orientation towards communicative praxis rooted in historical moments is also a concrete illustration of the irreducible involvement of life's past-present which is basically futuristic as well. This concept of time and action will help us see how our lifeworld can be enriched. As we put it earlier, Habermas thinks of the lifeworld as a communicatively integrated action sphere. He is aware, as Giddens points out, that "to understand the meaning of action involves being able in principle to participate in the form of life in which that action is incorporated" (1985:103). However, Habermas's act of "uncoupling the

system and lifeworld" (1987:153-197) has quite on the contrary cut the knot between theory and practice. As Misgeld argues, this distinction "detracts from the practical point of the theory and blocks reflection upon *actual social situations in the relevant societies of our times*" (60).³ Gadamer's hermeneutics of historicity reminds us of our situatedness and as a result makes possible the conceptualization of action in terms of time. Seen in this light, *Wo Mei-mei* can actually be regarded as an attempt to protect the lifeworld by introducing practice back to it, practice in terms of action, so that the individual can counterbalance the exploitative power of the patriarchal system of linguistic practices.

The sphere of lifeworld developed by Gadamer's hermeneutics is not freed from structures of power. But with its emphasis on the situatedness of the human subject who is interpretive in nature, it displaces the boundary between the dominant and the subordinate. As Gadamer says, "it is enough to say that we understand in a different way if we understand at all" (1975:264). The quest of self-understanding in *Wo Mei-mei* demonstrates to us that to understand is to understand anew, to produce new meanings. Reconstructing the past does not consist in the attempt to "'represent' it to ourselves; it is to *transform* it" (Madison 166-167). From time to time we see an ability of the narrator of reflection on the formative process of his multifarious subject-positions; and more often than not his admitting to himself that he does not absolutely understand them can also be taken as a sign of maturity. This is so because failing to resolve the contradictions of one's shifting positions does not mean that a person drifts aimlessly from one

³italics mine.

position to another; rather it turns out to be a positive and enlarged space which opens up the possibility of his grasp of the interface of multiple cultural codes, knowledge forms and the sociopolitical world in which he lives. Indeed, the space of subjectivity does not only encompass the history of the individual, but also from bottom up, the social practices of other human agents and the formative influences that they produce. In other words, the understanding of an individual is to be located in the hermeneutical sphere of communicative praxis, which is one of interpretation of communal memories and practices. And through understanding himself, the individual can also understand others, because one's self-consciousness is "given birth in the dialogic and actional encounters with other subjects, and it is able to sustain itself only within such encounters" (Shrag 171). What the narrator has learned is the realization in lived experience, of the importance of a dialogical and symmetrical structure of communication. For him, the most concrete and fruitful link established between himself and his little sister owes a lot to his openness towards intersubjective interaction on an equal footing, which results in his readiness to change his outlook on life. The little sister is of course the narrator's object of narrative in her own right. Nevertheless, we can still look at her at the same time as a double to represent for the brother an "ethnographical other". This positing of a female sibling as protagonist in one's life history is meant to set up a counter-balance of Chang's gendered subject position which has been a distorted one and disproportionably activated by the patriarchal social construction of reality. Seeing no other means of understanding himself, the autobiographical narrator is now able to attune himself, through his

deployment of a feminine outlook as a dear sister, a gift of his life (8), a severe critic of his writing as well as his chauvinistic attitude toward women in general, to the "native's point of view, in all its potential otherness" (Freeman 201).

The novel, seen in this light, is an act of resisting the closure of life, through articulating as the "I" against the many "mes" as a son, a brother and a writer, which has been shaped and formed by ideological interpellation as a "splintered subjectivity". It seems as if he is suggesting that the only way out of the circumscribed discursive space of interpellation is to fight it from and through language itself. This autobiographical form implies that we have to "look *out* at the world from *in* the world", to "try to distanciate your self from yourself" (Freeman 206) in order that the self, in the quest of self-understanding and self-transforming, can be located in the wider sphere of communicative praxis. In doing so, his public self can be mediated to his private self. It is because "the textual space of communicative praxis, which bonds the singular speech act with the history and system of language and integrates the actions of individual with the panoply of social practices, is not folded over in such a manner as to produce a private interior and a public exterior." (ibid 42-43). The boundary between public and private can be displaced, because the space of communicative praxis is "at once private and public" (ibid 42-43).

To return to where we start off, I want to assert that communication between people cannot be analysed only in terms of speech acts functions. Communication, indeed, as Habermas has pointed out, has one very important dimension, namely, an orientation towards mutual understanding.

But, being the medium of communication, language is laden with historical and institutional practices, so heavily laden that there are serious problems that the ideal of communicative rationality fail to address. The issue of gender differences, as *Wo Mei-mei* has shown, is one of these problems. Language helps constitute a public sphere in which men hold power and which creates and is dependent upon a private sphere in which women are oppressed. In order that these reified communicative practices can be cured, that connections between human agents and themselves, between human agents and the others can be made, I believe it is important to see the individual as a communicative citizen rooted in his historical situatedness, and as essentially interpretive. As interpretive beings, there are always hopes that "the self would be rewritten again, and again" because "appropriation could never be brought to completion" (Freeman 221). This implies that the boundary between what is public and private should be fluid and not fixed, so that people can decide for themselves what is public and what is private. Each and every citizen then is empowered to counter-balance the interpellation and oppression of hegemonic ideological forces. Autobiography, as *Wo Mei-mei* has shown, offers a good place to rewrite the self, since (re)interpreting one's life history activates a dynamic of transgression and resistance to the closure of life. As Habermas himself puts,

If aesthetic experience is incorporated into the context of individual life-histories, if it is utilized to illuminate a situation and to throw light on individual life-problems--if it at all communicates its impulses to a collective form of life--then art enters into a language game which is no longer that of aesthetic criticism, but belongs, rather, to everyday communicative practice. (1985a:202)

Through this incorporation, the aesthetic-expressive discourse can serve as a mediation between individuals and themselves, and between individual and others.

Chapter Four

A Moment in Transgression Intertextuality in *Ta Shuo-huang Chia*

In the previous two chapters, we have been concentrating on how literary texts can help mediate the dialogue between citizens and history, between citizens and themselves. In this chapter, we are going to locate these types of dialogue, through an analysis of *Ta Shuo-huang Chia* 大說謊家 [The Big Liar], in a society in which the media has become the dominant institutions of the public sphere. Indeed, the development of the mass media, together with that of mass culture, has grossly transformed the environment in which the exchange of "public opinions" can take place. We are going to see, in particular, how the literary text mediates citizens' dialogue with the institutions of the mass media. Like the previous two texts we look into, issues around the questions of writing and representation are still Chang's major attention. But this time, we will see the problematic constructed around the difference between the writing of news and the writing of fiction. Through an examination of the ability of the human agent to interweave news and fiction, I will try to reflect upon the ideal of a communicative citizen who can transgress the moment of being a passive reader and can engage in the process of active sense-making of media messages.

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, the development of the mass media is one major reason leading to the weakening of the construction of the public. The eighteenth century public sphere had its foundation on the distinction between private activities (for example, reading) that prepared people for public life and that public life itself. The

press was originally central to the constitution of the public sphere, because "it provided the main medium through which private opinions were transformed into public opinions, and the principal means by which government was subject to informal supervision" (Curran 38). Structural transformation came about, Habermas suggested, through a "refeudalization" of society, to which the media was a chief accessory (Habermas 1989:158). On the one hand, private organizations began to assume public power; on the other, the state penetrated into the private realm. The distinction between the private and the public was blurred. Rational public discourse was supplanted by power politics in which large organizations made deals with each other and with the state, while excluding the public. The media functioned as manipulative agencies controlling mass opinion, in contrast to the early press which had facilitated the formation and expression of public opinion.

Further, the growth of the mass media, together with that of mass culture, turned the citizen responsible for critical rational discourse into a "public consumer" (ibid 181). A joint consumption replaced an active participation in mutual critique, as "the web of communication unraveled into acts of individuated perception" (ibid 161). Moreover, "the sphere generated by the mass media has taken on the traits of a secondary realm of intimacy" (ibid 171). People experienced radio, film and television communication with an immediacy far greater than that characteristic of the printed word. One of the effects on public discourse then, was that it generated a general "sentimentality toward persons and corresponding cynicism toward institutions", which curtailed "subjective capacity for

rational criticism of public authority, even where it might objectively still be possible" (ibid 172). Whereas previously works of literature had been appropriated not just through individual reading but through group discussion and the critical discourse of literary publications, the modern media and the modern style of appropriation "removed the ground for a communication for what has been appropriated" (ibid 163). Thus, "the world fashioned by the mass media is a public sphere in appearance only" (ibid 171).

Habermas's analysis offers quite a dreary picture about how the media has led to a disintegration of the public sphere. Previous participants of the public were not only being manipulated, their ability to offer critical rational opinions were also reduced to mere consumption. However, we have to admit that we are now living in an age of electronic media. The romantic notion of a public sphere composed of individuals speaking face-to-face or communicating via small-circulation press is not of much utility. Also, I do not see the modern media as being absolutely manipulative and the human subjects as being totally under its influence. I will, on the contrary, assert that the media, rather than assuming a static mode of operation, occupies a space "which is constantly being contested, which is subject to organizational and technological restructuring, to economic, cultural and political constraints, to commercial pressures and to changing professional practices" (Eldridge 1993:20). The changing contours of this space will lead to different patterns of domination and different degrees of openness, both in terms of access to information, and range of opinions represented. What this implies, positively, is that the general media culture has provided us with a "shared interpretive framework" (Dahlgren 1991:17) in which people can

offer alternative interpretations to messages being put forward. Further, the media still plays a very important role in providing information to the general public. The media, alongside other parts of our cultural apparatus, notably the education system, plays a crucial role in producing an "informed citizenry", which is a "prerequisite for a mature democracy", because "public opinion, which we find crystallized and represented to us throughout the media, is itself affected by knowledge" (Eldridge 1993:20).

So, in order to fully understand the dynamics of the operation of the institutions of the mass media, we have to go beyond studying one-sided media effects, and have to consider the processes and conditions of the sense-making, whereby "subjects link experience and reflection to generate meaning (political or otherwise)" (Dahlgren 1991:16), using the information provided by the media. This will involve considering the media output, interactions between members of the public as well as the media-public interface. It is for this reason that we will turn to an analysis of *Ta Shuo-huang Chia*. We will see how Chang reinterprets journalistic output through intertwining journalistic discourse with fictional discourse. This will have the effect of challenging and redefining the boundary of the former as well as relocating it in the realm of "interdiscursivity", which stands for "the collective modes of discourse from which the postmodern parodically draws" (Hutcheon 1988:130). Eventually, we will see that this depends upon the belief of human agents being interpretive and historical in nature.

Ta Shuo-huang Chia was written between 5 December 1988 and 4 June 1989. Chang incorporated news from the daily paper into this fiction, which appeared as a serialized fiction in *Chung-shih Wan-pao* 中時晚報 during

that period. Its main storyline evolves around the investigations of a suspected assault case of the wife of Wu Pao-lin, manager of a computer technology company. The writer does not offer the scene of how his wife is attacked and who is responsible for the launching of the attack. So the characters as well as the readers are all along kept from the "truth" of the case. The investigation draws a lot of people together, not only Wu's mother-in-law, the famous and rich Mrs. Chen, but also two stupid policemen, one Public Prosecutor, a hard-boiled detective, who is a friend of Wu and the secret lover of his wife, a councillor, doctors, nurses, and even Palestinian leader Arafat, Muslim leader Komini, and American President Bush. We also see an entanglement of plots, lies and conspiracies, with events like the bombing of a temple in Punjab, the intrusion of the Palestinian Liberation Organization into Tel Aviv, and even the June Fourth democratic movement. This type of narrative mingling news and fictive element is a new creation by Chang, which he calls the **newsfiction**. He remarks that the genre "is a way we deal with our memory by weaving the reality through the fictitious, and constructing the fictitious with the reality" (是一種試圖以「虛構」來編織「現實」、同時也用「現實」來營造「虛構」的記憶處理方式。) (1992:13). To Chang, we are always using various kinds of memory to interpret the texts we read, no matter they are real or fictitious.

Mrs. Chan, head of many multinational corporations and friend of a lot of international figures like Arafat, Komini and Bush, is one of the main characters through whom news and fictional element are threaded together. For instance, Arafat is liable to her for what he does (53). She also sends dried pork to Komini who, against his religious faith, eats them in order to

strengthen his body defense against cancer (160). She is also the secret commander of a lot of terrorist activities. In incorporating these real people and events, Chang is deliberately playing upon the reliability of the news media. This incorporation is not meant to authenticate his fictional world, as if to hide the joints between fiction and reality. Rather, he is putting forward another set of questions: how do we come to know about these real events and people? What do and can we know about them? Chang goes even further, in playing upon the editorial of the official Chinese paper, *Ren-min Ri-pao* 人民日報 [The People's Daily] at the time when students in China were mourning for the death of Hu Yao Bang, in saying sarcastically that, "But then, the editorial of the CCP's 'Ren-min Ri-pao' expresses: we must fabricate history" (不過，中共《人民日報》今天的社論則表示：一定要旗幟鮮明地捏造歷史。) (245-246). I do not think that he intends to construct a wilful betrayal of politically tragic events. However, he does want to make a connection to the real world of political action through the readers--by making them aware of the need to question received versions of reality, especially when this world is so much "saturated" by the media (Eldridge 1993a:342). Chang himself puts in one of the remarks, that the media frames our understanding of things,

If it were not for the collapse of the spectators platform of the soccer field, the media would not have let us discover how God had been punishing this crowded colonial sovereign kingdom so intensively with plane disasters and train crash.

如非足球看台倒塌，媒體也不會讓我們發現：上帝在過去四個月內如何密集地以空難和火車互撞來懲罰這個擁擠的殖民宗主國度。 (229)

However, the writer takes pains in showing that the media is subtly constructed upon a dialectical relation with hegemonic elites of the society on the one hand, and reader-viewers on the other. Important figures like Mrs. Chen can manipulate the news media over the kind of information to give to the public. In one instance, in order to arouse publicity, she makes a deliberate declaration that she needs to clarify some misunderstandings, knowing clearly that "this sort of clarifying will only arouse the curiosity of the journalists to dig into those 'unnecessary misunderstandings'" (這一類的「澄清」只會更加勾引新子鼻子們挖掘那些「無謂的誤會」的興趣) (199). On the other side of the picture, clever journalists would also screen and create stories according to the interests of the readers. Let us take a look at the following description of the only journalist who appears in the fiction,

What Prosecutor Ma Yen-hao cannot think of happens a few days later--the journalist, in order to make a few extra dollars, writes a lousy article in a lousy magazine called *The Inside Story* under a fake name, describing dramatically "the mystery of the death of enterprise magnate Chen Shao-hao-- a strange traffic accident taking place six years ago revealed the truth of how a rich overseas Chinese businessman was set up--inside story intriguing".

令馬言浩檢察官意想不到的事在隔天之後發生了——那名記者爲了賺幾文外快，化名在一份《獨家內幕》的爛腳雜誌上寫了一篇爛腳文章，繪聲繪影地描述「企業鉅子陳曉浩死因成謎——一樁發生在六年以前的離奇車禍案驚爆出華僑富商遭人謀害的內幕，過程曲折離奇……」 (194)

The journalist, in order that he can earn the money, dramatizes the event of Chen (husband of the rich and famous Mrs. Chen)'s death, "by diminishing the information and increasing the 'entertainment' content" (Gouldner 121). The consequence is that "the attention of a lot of big and

small media is aroused" (引起了許多大小傳播媒體的注意) (195). The interaction of these different media, relying upon the curiosity of the reader-viewers, turns the piece of news into a big media event. This kind of relationship between the media, the hegemonic elites and the people is very powerfully registered by one of the remarks in the very last part of the book:

Journalists who dare to ask anything will create a group of readers who wish to know anything and officials who dare to say anything. As a result, we weave together a vow of alliance through the triangular relationship of the freedom of the press, the rights to know and political lies.

甚麼都敢問的記者會造就一批甚麼都想知道的讀者和甚麼都敢講的官僚。於是，我們締結了新聞自由、知的權利和政治謊言的三角共生盟誓。(266)

Chang clearly sees that "news [is] not a mirror image of what [is] happening in the world but a professional construction of social reality. In this sense news [is] not simply mediated but produced by journalists" (Eldridge 1993:19). By rethinking journalistic practice, Chang is not just trying to embrace "the fictional element inevitable in any reporting" and then to imagine its "way to the truth" (Scholes 37). He is seriously questioning who determines and creates the truth. The complicating relation between news and literature, reality and political lies is finally captured by a conversation between our hard-boiled detective Old Lu and Jenny, a secret agent of an underground organization, the Greenland:

"I don't believe that," Old Lu said to the girl who claimed herself to be 'Jenny', "In my information, Jenny is called 'Chen Li-chuan'. I have complete information about her life."

"Is news report reliable?"

Old Lu repeated what she said, "Is news report reliable?"

"The information about 'Chen Li-chuan' came from the newspaper. The news agent got their information from the police. The source of information for police was 'Greenland'. 'Greenland' depended on what I investigated--" the mysterious girl folded her little nose, and said with a smile which was not a smile, "I said 'I' died. Do you believe it?"

The mysterious girl further asked, "What else do you want to know? Even if you know it, so what? Who cares? You wouldn't think that you would come to any truth for this case?"

"There is no truth?"

"Only misunderstandings, and then suspicion, and then investigation, and then snaring, and then lies, and then misunderstandings, and then the circle will start all over again, and again."

「我不相信。」老呂對這個自稱是「Jenny」的神秘女郎說：「在我的資料裡，Jenny叫『鄭麗娟』，一切身家資料都很完整——」

「新聞報導能相信嗎？」

老呂重複一句她的說：「新聞報導能相信嗎？」

「『鄭麗娟』的資料是報紙上登的，報社的消息是警方提供的，警方的來源是『綠地』，『綠地』又是靠我打探的情報——」神秘女郎皺起她小巧的鼻頭，似笑非笑地說：「我說『我』死了，你信不信？」

神秘女郎Jenny乘勝追擊：「你還想知道些甚麼？就算你都知道了，So what? Who cares?你該不會真地以為這整件案子到頭來會有甚麼的真相罷？」

「沒有真相？」

「只是誤會、然後懷疑、然後調查、然後羅織、然後說謊、然後誤會、然後循環一次、再循環一次。」 (282-283)

The media is not responsible for producing any truth. It can only get entangled with a lot of different structuring forces, commercial, structural, organizational. The media mediate, only in the sense that "they stand between the public, on the one side, and on the other, the official managers of institutions, organizations, movements or the society's hegemonic elites" (Gouldner 123). Or perhaps we can say, that truth is less illusory than it is institutional, for we always act and use language in the context of politico-discursive conditions (Eagleton 168).

In the multi-media world of *Ta Shuo-huang Chia*, the distinction between the private and the public, interior and exterior space is blurred and replaced by media events. Everything that goes between Mrs. Chen and her husband, between Wu and his wife, every thought of Prosecutor Ma, is put to public scrutiny through the media. The domestic scene--or the private sphere per se--is made explicit or transparent, "in a sort of obscenity where the most intimate processes of our life become the virtual feeding ground of the media" (Baudrillard 1983:130). The distinction between the real and its representation is also blurred. Television programmes have a capacity to produce a reality "more real than real", where the real is subordinated to representation. For instance, there is in the story a drama series which is about people who are Mrs. Chen's friends in real life. However, the nurses at her hospital do not know of those people and believe that it is only a television drama. They laugh at her for "childishly and simplistically indulging in a drama series, so much so that she fails to differentiate true from false" (幼稚膚淺地迷上電視劇以至真偽不分) (69). In fact, it is the nurses who are not able to do so. The real, to be more specific, is already enmeshed with the discourses from entertainment (Dahlgren 1991:17).

To quote Baudrillard, in this postmodern mediascape of *Ta Shuo-huang Chia*, the institution of the media, with its multi-signifying systems and modes of discourse, becomes a kind of "simulation machine", which reproduces images, signs and codes which in turn come to constitute an autonomous realm of (hyper)reality. Even the name of Mrs. Chen becomes a "sign" (符號) (199). However, the way Chang sees the relation between the media and the public is very different from Habermas. People are not

totally passive, nor are they totally under the ideological interpellation of the mass media. As shown earlier, the press forms a triangular relationship with people's right to know and political lies. Together they put the communicative process in interaction. Signs, like people's names, in this light, must not be simply regarded as given properties, but have to be understood as the medium and outcome of that interactive process. That is why Giddens claims, in a sharp reference to Habermas,

We should not conceive of the structures of domination built into social institutions as in some way grinding out 'docile bodies' who behave like the automata suggested by objectivist social science. Power within social systems which enjoy some continuity over time and space presumes regularised relations of autonomy and dependence between actors and collectivities in context of social interactions. But all forms of dependence offer some resources whereby those who are subordinate can influence the activities of their superiors. This is what I call the *dialectic of control* in social systems. (1984:15-16)

By inserting fictional events into daily news and vice versa, Chang is not denying the existence of the real. Nor is he trying to decipher distorted messages from the news media. He is not even lamenting the inability of audience in engaging in critical reflection. Quite on the contrary, he is putting into question the authority of any act of writing by locating the discourse of journalism "within an ever-expanding intertextual network that mocks any notion of either single origin or simple causality" (Hutcheon 1988:129) and thus within the interpretation of the readers. Let me quote from Barthes to explain what I mean by intertextuality here,

A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into relations of dialogue parody, contestation, but there is

one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the place on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. (1977:148)

A text, for instance a piece of news, is not just a single text, but a multiplicity of texts. In other words, a text is always referring to another text, or in fact a web of texts. Textual referents are always already textualized: "the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*" (Barthes 1977a:160). The notion of the "already read" encompasses more than the idea that we all possess conventional knowledge whose sources we cannot recall. It extends towards a notion of the subject as constituted by the texts of its culture, the subject as the already read. What it implies is that the subject is being interpellated on multiple levels, not just by news reports. Moreover, when we read the paper, we are always "reproducing" the text, through interacting with it with the knowledge we have from other sources. Literature, in *Ta Shuo-huang*, Chia apparently forms one of these sources.

Chang, in his essay "I-chieh Tu-shi Chuang-chuo" 一切都是創作 [Everything is Creation], comments that "it is news and fiction that make our life so much more complicated than it would be without them" (正是新聞和小說把這世界搞得比沒有它們的時候複雜了不少。)(1992:9). In the story, Chang always writes about how fiction can influence people's way of interpreting news and its so-called reality,

All day long, Old Lu indulges himself in the memory of this scene of embarrassment. If those "the ends of bamboo move in the wind, the shadow of the moon moves across the wall" in the journal mean

anything "miserable and lonely", will it not be the sorrow of "the mistress meeting her secret lover's girlfriend" ?

If Old Lu had read *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, perhaps he wouldn't be as such frustrated ?

That is the lamentation before the passaway of Lin Tai-yu. Shortly before that our Brother Pao is busy getting married with Hsueh Pao-ch'ai. Wu Pao-lin and Old Lu and those judges, prosecutor and policemen who handle this case are not liable to read literature, or *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. So definitely they could not comprehend the deep lamentations of love in the words that Ms Chen P'ei-yun left so unintentionally. It seems to be related to the case in which Wu Pao-lin is suspected to have assaulted his wife--if the policemen and the judges were familiar with *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, could they not guess about her extra-marital affair, and then affirm that Wu had the "subconscious intention to kill his wife" ?

It is lucky that they are not literary people, otherwise the privacies of Ms Chen P'ei-yun have to be revealed. Suspensions against Wu Pao-lin have to be multiplied. This will not bring any advantage to anyone of the people involved. It will even arouse the intention of the old Mrs. Chen to do away with Old Lu.

一整天，老呂都泡在這一幕尷尬情境的追憶之中。如果日記裡那「竹梢風動，月影移牆」的話有甚麼「淒涼冷淡」的意思，難道就是「情婦遇見情夫女友」的傷感嗎？

如果老呂讀過紅樓夢，也不會如此困擾了罷？

那是林黛玉死前的一段感懷，她臨終之際我們的寶哥哥正忙著迎娶薛寶釵。吳寶林和老呂以及承辦這整樁殺妻案的推事、檢察官以及刑警都沒有義務讀文學、讀紅樓夢，當然就不會參透陳佩雲女士漫不經心隨手默錄下來的文字其實有很深沉的悼情意味。這一點與吳寶林涉嫌襲擊妻子的案子好像有關——如果檢警、推事熟悉紅樓夢，不就可以推查她的婚外情，從而認定吳寶林具有「潛在的殺妻犯意」了嗎？

幸虧他們不是文學人口，不然陳佩雲女士的隱私要平白曝光，吳寶林的罪嫌又要加重幾成，這對任何一位當事人都沒好處，更有可能使陳老太太起意把老呂也給幹掉。

(73-74)

With an ironical sleight of hand, Chang foregrounds the ambivalent relation between literature and the so-called reality. At this point, he has already gone beyond the simple conclusion that the writing/reporting of real events is a fictional act, but that reality is itself "invested like fiction, with

inter-relating plots which appear to interact independently of human designs" (Waugh 48,49). Our daily reality is structured like *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. Our reading of it has a direct bearing upon our reading of reality. But more than that, Chang even plays upon what is assumed to be real and fake in a metafictional manner. Fictive characters like Mrs. Chen, Shen-Ye, and Old Lu are supposed to be real people living in the city of Taipei and reading *Chung-shi Wan-pao* everyday, which features *Ta Shuo-fang Chia*. The following conversation will serve to dramatize the paradoxical relationship between the real and the fictitious,

"Head of Men" nodded, rearranging the six pistols that were on his body, ready to take his leave to go. Suddenly he heard Shen Ye warned, "Be aware of your move! Especially that bastard writer Chang Ta-chun--he seems to know so clearly everything we do so."
 "How can I protect myself from him?" "Head of Men" shook.
 "Don't read *Ta Shuo-fang chia*, and he won't exist," said Shen Ye, "and I will try to give him a lesson through people I know, so that he will never be able to write again for the rest of his life."

「鐮頭」點點頭，整了整渾身披掛的六枝槍，正要告辭，忽然又聽神爺悄聲囑咐道：「留神行跡！尤其是那個寫小說的混蛋張大春——我們幹甚麼他都好像瞭若指掌的樣子。」

「我該怎麼防他呢？」「鐮頭」打個冷顫。

「別看中時晚報的《大說謊家》，他就不存在了。」神爺說：「我另外動用一點關係，教他一輩子寫不成個屁！」
 (128)

Chang is actually trodding on the very ambivalent line between fiction and reality here. It is so ambivalent that it seems sometimes there, sometimes not. At this point, news, fiction and reality are entangled in a very complicated web. From the reader's point of view, in the process of reading, he/she has to acknowledge that the text is only fictional. On the

other hand, the text also demands "that he participate, that he engage himself intellectually, imaginatively and affectively in his co-creation" (Hutcheon 1980:7). The real events exist, exactly through this paradox of the reader's reading of the text. Chang, hence, challenges naive notions of representation, by "both installing it materially and subverting it" (Hutcheon 1988:119).

At best, language refers, not to things, but "ready-made textual units" (Riffaterre 1984:159). The notion of the intertext, refers to "the impossibility of living outside the infinite text" (Barthes 1975:31). By discursively pluralizing the fictional and the journalistic discourse, the center of both is dispersed. It "replaces the challenged author-text relationship with one between reader and text, one that situates the locus of textual meaning within the history of discourse itself" (Hutcheon 1988:126). Through this, Chang is challenging the closure of either journalistic or fictional discourse and its discursive interpellation of the reader-viewer. I do not think that he is trying to replace journalistic discourse with the fictional, however. On the contrary, he is saying that the center of any discourse lies with interpretation, rather than with the text. This situated determination of meaning reflects that which Heidegger refers to as the fore-structure of understanding. His point is that even before I begin consciously to interpret a text, I have already placed it within a certain context, approached it from a certain perspective and conceived of it in a certain way. There is no neutral vantage point from which to survey the "real" meaning of a text. Even a scientific approach to an object places it within a certain context and takes a certain attitude towards it. The meaning of any text then is co-determined by one's own circumstances and expectations. Gadamer develops it further, in saying

that all understanding involves projections of meaning that arise out of one's own situation and go beyond the observable "facts", because "we understand...transmitted texts on the basis of expectations of meaning that are created by our own previous relation to the subject matter" (1975:279).

Interpretation, as Chang sees it, is rooted in the encounter between our memory and the text we are going to interpret. Indeed this is the rationale behind his creation of the genre of the newsfiction. As he says, "There will never be any reader who is totally passive. It is because any reader can ask questions from his memory to the text. The difference lies only in the capacity of that memory" (1992:11). Reading is not a passive process. The text, seen in this light, is never complete in itself, but only in its "the *intersection of the world of the text and the world of the reader*" (Ricoeur 1991:26). No matter we are reading news or fiction, we are actively using our memory either from history or from the text to interact with it (Chang 1992:12),

Readers reading news or fiction are having dialogues with the text from his various kinds of memory. These memories will collide against these dialogues. Sometimes, we will use the memory from our "reality" to visit an imaginary world. Sometimes, we will use our memory from our imagination to question a realistic world. No matter the former or the latter, reading is not as unambiguous as in our ideal. It will weave together imagination and reality through our dialogues with the texts. Our power to take the initiative and control originates from "asking from memory". When we lack memory or (hence) stop questioning, these rights will disappear.

讀新聞的人和讀小說的人都在由種種記憶激發出來的問題中與作品對話著，這些記憶和對話不停地彼此衝撞。有些時候，我們會用原本屬於「虛構」的記憶去質疑一個現實的世界。無論何者，閱讀這種行為都不像我們「理想」中那樣「真歸真、假歸假」地涇渭判然，它都會經由我們和作品的對話而將

現實和虛構更形複雜地糾結在一起，我們的主動權和控制權始於「憑記憶而發問」，當欠缺記憶或（因而）停止發問的時候，這些權利也隨之喪失。

(ibid 13)

Memory, in this light, is very important in a reader's reading process. It is a very important way for the reader to relate to the "textualized real". This "primacy of memory", to borrow Freeman's term, is particularly important to our discussion of the media-public interface, i.e., the interactive communicative process between the media and the public. It is because memory, "which often has to do not merely with recounting the past, but with making sense of it--from 'above', as it were--is an interpretive act the end of which is an enlarged understanding of the self" (Freeman 29). In other words, memory testifies to how we enter into a new form of subjectivity, in a world saturated with information, images, media events and even "ecstasies", instead of becoming "a pure screen, a switching center for all networks of influence" (Baudrillard 1983:133).

There are different types of memory, and the capacity we have for one is not the same as that we have for another, and therein lies our ability to be active interpreters. As the characters of *Ta Shuo-huang Chia* show, "people do not have the habit to memorize 'news'" (世人對新聞沒有記憶的習慣) (300). The reason why this is so is hinted here,

when different kinds of horrible massacre, disasters and crimes find excuses for people to accept them, "horror" itself will be forgotten. People will begin to believe: it is "only a tragedy of history".

當恐怖屠殺、災難、犯罪都能找到使人接受由時，「恐怖」本身就被遺忘，人們開始相信：它只是「歷史的悲劇而已。」

(201)

People do not like to remember horror. The Chinese, in particular, detest bad memories. This is powerfully captured by this remark,

When the Chinese New Year comes, the Chinese will get a disease the medical term for which is 'temporary destitutory collective amnesia'. They will forget the days and weeks of the Western Calendar, but only remember the first few days of the Chinese New Year.

每到陰曆年間，中國人就會罹患一種學名叫「暫時性特定標的集體失憶症」，忘記陽曆的日期和星期，只知初一、初二、初三、初四……。(121)

The state of forgetfulness--one cannot help but be reminded of Keats' negative capability--touches on the lifestyle characteristic of contemporary urban people, especially when the stereotype of the "hard-boiled detective" is being evoked in the story. The characterization of Old Lu, our "hard-boiled detective" 「冷硬偵探」(102), as being always indifferent and forgetful about daily news, reveals, as Chang himself puts it, "human beings' 'fear and alienation' towards the city. The process of revelation (investigation of crimes and exposition of the life and psychology of the 'hard-boiled detective') is itself a reflection of this 'fear and alienation'" (人對都市的「恐懼和疏離」；而「揭發」的過程（對犯罪案的追查以及對『冷硬偵探』本身經歷或心理的暴露）也正是對此一「恐懼和疏離」的反省。）(1992b:90). Living in a world filled with "conspiracies, traps, attacks, plundering and killings" (種種陰謀、陷阱、侵奪和殺戮)(180), and failing in his love affair, Old Lu has always to remain cold and indifferent, "because he is a 'hard-boiled' detective" (因為他是「冷硬偵探」)(126). The operation of his memory is weird. On the one hand, he does not have the habit to remember news (317); on the other, he has immense "graphic memory capacity" (「圖像記憶力」)

(128), and can precisely get hold of his memory as his data for investigation (133). His memory, as the writer remarks, comes from "another imaginary world" (另一個虛構世界) (317). He uses this memory, notably from the world of Wu's wife's journal and his imagination, to interpret the complicated web of facts surrounding the case. Apparently, his forgetfulness about news is intentional, constituted in an attempt to challenge the boundary of ideological interpellation of the discourse of the news media.

The characterization of Old Lu plays a very important role in the novel in delivering to it a very delightful tone. Let's look at the following paragraph to see how he is described:

This is the first time in his life: Old Lu does not screen a woman under the age of forty with a pure intention. At that instant, he surrenders to the face which is so plain--that feeling is not much too different from the "marvel at the beauty" people talk about. The physiological response of both is like electrification--the pulse accelerates by $1/3$ -- $1/4$, breathing becomes faster, the pupil becomes bigger. And then, our hard-boiled detective flushes (the intensity can not be compared to passionate boys who are trying to show off).

這是有生以來第一次：老呂沒有用純色的眼光打量一個四十歲以下的女人。他在剎那間向一張姿色平庸的臉孔投降——這種感覺和一般人所謂的「驚艷」並無二致，兩者的生理反應均有如觸電——心跳加速 $1/3$ — $1/4$ 、呼吸變急促、瞳孔稍稍放大；然後，我們的冷硬偵探臉紅了（激動程度遠不如示威的熱情男兒）。
(283)

In the process of reading, though sympathizing with Old Lu for being so serious in his investigation and a failure in his love affair, readers will not forget about laughing at his ridiculous character. Old Lu is described like a cartoon character. As Chang himself says, with this "playful tone" (輕描), the burden of remembering the news and finding the truth exists no more

(1992b:97). This kind of "bullshitting" (「廢話」) (Chang 1992c:121) totally changes the expectations the readers have towards the text, thus liberating the book from a search for a coherent truth from the news media. Chang remarks, "If we have to be more 'hard-boiled' than the 'hard-boiled detective', probably the 'playful tone' will be our only form of rhetoric" (如果我們比「冷硬偵探」還要「冷硬」，「輕妙」恐怕就是我們唯一需要的修辭學了。) (1992b:98). That is to say, we can only deal with the media by taking it easy, or, by adding our imagination to it. In other words, by parodying.

By parodying imagination against facts, the world of the media and facts is rendered topsy-turvy. In doing so *Ta Shuo-fang Chia* is not trivializing the factual and the real, but rather repoliticizing them through a metafictional rethinking of the epistemological relation between news, fiction and reality. As Bakhtin (1984) has theorized at length the carnivalesque power of what is certainly not a trivial and trivializing force. The carnivalesque moment in the novel is one in which "life [is] drawn out of its usual rut", or is in some radical way "turned inside out" (1984a:122). All hierarchical structures and all conventional forms of representation are suspended. Things which are normally separate and distinct are brought together, so that "the sacred [combines] with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid" (ibid 123). The parodic intertexts constitute a kind of "double voicings, for they play off one meaning against another" (Hutcheon 1988:211). Through this double voicings, this game-playing, it renegotiates the borders between the real and the imaginary, the serious and the playful, the public and the private.

I do not think that Chang is urging us to forget all about the news

media, though. As we have quoted before, our power of being active and in control originates from "asking from memory". Particularly about big events, historical tragedies like the June Fourth, we can see that he is urging us indeed to face the bloody memory, to remember the real:

If you do not admit your wrongs you have to lie. If you lie you have to continue to commit wrong-doings. If the student movement in the Mainland fails, there will surely be only one reason: ten billion people lie together for the leaders who have done wrong together in order that there will not be any disintegration. The lies will be: Deng Xiao Ping is hidden from the truth, it will be better if Li Peng is exchanged with another, the whole movement is a conspiracy of political struggle, there has never been any repression with force and massacre...the news media in oblivion of the whole world are expanding these lies in an accelerating rate in order that there will be new information everyday.

不認錯就要撒謊，撒了謊就繼續犯錯。如果這一次大陸學運失敗，肯定只有一個原因：十億人民爲了避免分裂而一齊替犯錯的領導班子撒謊。謊言如下：鄧小平受矇蔽而不知情、換下李鵬明天會更好，整個運動是場有預謀的政治鬥爭，從來沒有也絕對不會有暴力鎮壓與屠殺情事……全世界健忘的新聞媒體正爲了每天能有新訊息而加速膨脹這些謊言。(291)

We can see that Chang has never tried to erase the line between news and imagination, lies and reality, and memory and facts. He is just trying to say that the boundary between these categories is fluid, and can be moved. We, after all, have to use our memory to understand. We need to remember. It is like what Habermas says on the use of history here, when he talks about the legacy of the Holocaust to the new generation Germans: that it is our obligation to keep alive the memory of the sufferings of those murdered, and we must keep it alive quite openly and not just in our own minds. He says, "These dead have above all a claim to the weak anamnestic power of a

solidarity which those born later can now only practise through the memory which is being renewed, which may often be desparate, but which is at any rate active and circulating" (1988:44). Chang himself has done a good job in renewing these memories of our past -- through writing.

As Gadamer has said, it is through the written text that tradition is handed down (what he called linguistic tradition), and hence how our recollection is continued:

A written tradition is not a fragment of the past world, but has already raised itself beyond this into the sphere of meaning that it expresses. The ideality of the word is what raises everything linguistic beyond the finitude and transience that characterize other remnants of past existence. It is not this document, as a piece of the past, that is the bearer of tradition but the continuity of memory. Through it tradition becomes part of our own world, and thus what it communicates can be stated immediately. (1975:390)

As such, what happens in the reading process is that of recollection. We are not recreating the original meaning of the written text, because "in the form of writing, all tradition is contemporaneous with each present time" (Gadamer 1975:390). The reading then "is not a repetition of something past but the sharing of a present meaning" (ibid 392). The reader is parodying the text with his own memory, or in the words of Gadamer, playing a game with it. In this game-playing, the interpreter participates in the production of meaning, which is one for himself, through "the subtle dialectical and dialogical relation that exists between the interpreter and what he seeks to interpret" (R.J. Bernstein 274). And this, is already the filtering and screening process in which the reader-viewer can play an active part. It works particularly well for the serialized fiction like *Ta Shuo-huang Chia*,

because "the reader works to imagine what happens next, since suspense determines the cut" (Hutcheon 1980:141-142). And this is how, going back to Habermas, we "appropriate critically and not blindly" the traditions of our history (1988:45).

It is where I see the possibility of the citizen transgressing the moment of a passive reader. *Ta Shuo-huang Chia* in this light involves seeing the political in the domains of the personal and the cultural. "For if citizens are to constitute 'publics', if they are to be more than anomic media consumers, isolated in their homes, they require shared experiential frameworks and symbolic raw materials to shape their collective identities, even if impermanent" (Dahlgren 1992:17). Journalism, as a kind of political communication, constitutes a link between the settings of the private sphere (home, friends, etc.) and the public sphere of current events and politics, the relations between which are very complex. People do not look at the world by simply reproducing the terms and categories offered by the media. In other words, a prerequisite to the functioning of the publics is some subjective sense of the community. With regard to this, I am already trying to go beyond the Habermas-inspired notion of the public sphere. The political implications of the symbolic communities which the news media may foster, and the nature of the connections established between the personal and the political are, of course, a further analytical question deserving extra attention. But here let it suffice to say that rethinking the mass media as a part of mass culture does not signal the demise of the public sphere, and may well point to its renewal. Through a direct confrontation with the news media, *Ta Shuo-hang Chia* illustrates an attempt of the writer

to demarginalize the literary. I hope that, situated in this direction, the above analysis has been able to show how literary discourse can intervene into journalistic discourse, thus mediating our dialogue with the institutions of the mass media.

Chapter Five

Conclusion: Understanding as Political Praxis

A central question leading me along the process of writing this dissertation has been: can literature and hermeneutics do anything in a society plagued with innumerable problems, penetrated by different kinds of relations of oppression? Now, after a study into three of the works of Chang Ta-chun by using Gadamer's hermeneutics, I want to push things a step further in exploring the implications they have with regard to social development. Let me also in this chapter spell out some personal beliefs and wishes in the possible achievements of literature and hermeneutics.

I have said in the introductory chapter that I want to see if the hermeneutic public sphere opens the space needed for political praxis. What do I mean by political praxis? Why am I so attracted to it? The notion of political praxis in fact comes from Antonio Gramsci, who lays the foundation for a new Marxist science of politics in an attempt to delineate the new strategy of the "war of positions" for the proletarian revolutionary struggle, that is, the struggle for hegemony. To this end he asserts that political praxis is always situated in history, which means that the development of hegemony, that is, the continual process of its disintegration and reformation, can only be understood and assessed in terms of the development of a political group which can go beyond its own economic interests, and create a new conception of the world that is superior to the prevailing one. Consequently, the possibility of the triumph of one hegemony over another does not lie in its logical, a priori character, or its

superior intellectual qualities. On the contrary, it has to be located in the specific relations of forces that characterize a given situation, which requires a careful study of the historical context. Gramsci's insistence on the historicity of hegemony is, among other things, a rejection of all transcendental principles, such as that of reason, which contains in itself a set of ideas or norms that provides the basis for the development of history. This means that the success of any hegemonic system is not related to the discovery of any transcendental ideas but a new way of organizing socio-economic life that offers the possibilities of greater individual as well as group development and satisfaction. Gramsci further asserts that analyses of specific historical situations cannot and must not be ends in themselves. They acquire their significance only if they serve to justify political activities, or help make decisions of the present. Political intervention, then, is the goal of Gramsci's historically oriented analysis. This identification of historicity with political praxis, to Gramsci, will lead to the unity of theory and practice,

The philosophy of praxis does not tend to leave the "simple" in their primitive philosophy of common sense, but rather to lead them to a higher conception of life...Consciousness of being a part of a particular hegemonic force (that is to say, political consciousness) is the first stage toward a further progressive self-consciousness in which theory and practice will finally be one. (1971:332-333)

And here is why the idea of political praxis attracts me so much. It helps produce a political consciousness which engages every individual in the process of counter-hegemonic struggles. It is an attempt to put theory into practice and vice versa. However, Gramsci's conception of hegemonic

struggles has its own problems. He sees the need to revise the Marxist theme of historical materialism because he finds that political struggle does not only take place between the two fundamental antagonistic classes--the bourgeoisie and the working class. But, he maintains that if the struggle between antagonistic classes constitutes, in the final instance, the determining level of all political struggles, the struggles of all other groups within a social formation must nevertheless be articulated to it. It means that the working class cannot isolate itself. And for the other social groups to become allies rather than enemies, it has to make concessions to them, help them solve their problems and appropriate the ideological elements of these groups to its hegemonic principle. As Laclau argues, the limitations of Gramsci's approach lie precisely in his view that "only the fundamental classes of society can be hegemonic subjects" (1984:42). But I think, Gramsci's concept of hegemony still serve to remind us of two important characteristics about social revolution. First, there are different kinds of relations of oppressions existing in a society, which means that there are many social groups which are engaged in the process of hegemonic struggles. Second, the creation of hegemony does not depend on obtaining the consent of individual groups, but rather, on the organizing of a collective will and interest. I believe if we can critically rethink these two points we can actually go beyond Gramsci's model and rearticulate a conception of counter-hegemonic struggles in such a way that will help us see the way to a radically democratic society. We need to assert that first, subjects counteracting social suppression are pluralistic. The proletariat does not monopolize the right to initiate revolution. Every sphere of resistance, for

example, labour's movement, women's movement, has its own self-sufficient discourse. There is no a priori relation between each of these discourses. What this means is that every kind of social conflict is only partial, in the sense that no one kind of resistance will lead to ultimate liberation. This will bring me to my second point, because we are not concerned with the amelioration of the living conditions of only individual groups. It is that for these autonomous and self-sufficient struggles to be effective in bringing about social transformation, they must be articulated in such a way that they will become a liberation discourse about the whole society. Political actions can at the same time bind them together in terms of collective social struggles. As a result, what I think we need today is an analytical framework that enables us to conceptualize counter-hegemonic struggles for every oppressed group so that they can strive for, both individually and collectively, their biggest interests.

Can Habermas's model of the public sphere fulfill this job? In the previous chapters, I hope I have succeeded in demonstrating its inadequacies for such a purpose. Let me recapitulate them very briefly here. First, he locates identity formation in the realm of the private. So participants have no say in altering their identities. If they enter the public sphere as oppressed groups, they will remain the oppressed. Second, language as the embodiment of traditional and historical values will not be able to bring a universally true consensus suitable to every social group. It may instead act as a tool of exploitation and reinforce the boundaries between dominant and subordinate discourses. Third, his supposition of a critical rationality to "decipher distorted patterns of communication" deprives the interlocutors of

a willingness to accept others' opinions as correct and a readiness to let radical changes be made to their own opinions. The truth will then be monopolized by the power bloc. This theory of rationality has also led to a neglect of the historical specificities of individuals.

Finally, he treats interpersonal differences primarily as a matter of economic interests, which leads to a neglect of other kinds of differences, like that in sex, race, profession, age, etc.. I want to treat this point with particular attention here as it will help me explain why I see literature as a battlefield against the hegemonic power bloc. As the subtitle of Habermas's book--"An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society"-- suggests, the major direction of his study is how the bourgeois society produced a certain form of public sphere. This new social network, together with the rational-critical discourse that grew in salons, coffee houses, etc., depended on the rise of national and territorial power states on the basis of the early capitalist commercial economy. This process led to an idea of a society separate from the state and of a private realm separate from the public--the civil society. Capitalist market economies "developed into the sphere of 'civil society' that as the genuine domain of private autonomy stood opposed to the state" (1989:12). Habermas's public sphere depended on this counterposing of the state and the civil society. He stressed how a private sphere of society could take on a public relevance, "civil society came into existence as the corollary of depersonalized state authority" (ibid 19). It engendered a group of educated elite who came to see itself as constituting the public who were not just the objects of state actions but the opponent of public authority.

I have great reservation towards this model of the public sphere which

rests on a counterposition between the state and the civil society. It considers the division of the state and the civil society as the fundamental political line of demarcation. It also emphasizes the political rights of the citizen to participate in the public realm to influence state policies over and above all other social rights. Thus, it will lead to a neglect of other social conflicts and a marginalization of subjects under other kinds of subordination. Moreover, each kind of antagonistic relation exists in multiple forms depending on how it is discursively constituted. So, every warline (domination/ counter-domination) is involved with factors of other kinds of domination. For example, in political domination like male/gendered politics, sexist and racist elements can be involved. By the same token, political and economic elements can be interwoven with sexual discrimination. The female sex demanding equality is definitely a political warfare. Their demanding for expectancy leave will be an economic warfare. Another point is, we cannot afford to forget that the civil society can be the seat of numerous relations of domination, and so of antagonisms and democratic struggles. It is not a romantic, unified construct counteracting the state. So the demands of social struggles are not necessarily "situated at the level of parties and of the state" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:153). I think we should conceive of a pluralistic type of struggles whose objective is "the transformation of social relation which constructs a subject in a relationship of subordination"(ibid).

Let me now go back to the case of contemporary Taiwan with regard to the development of social and political movements. After the lifting of the martial law, we see a hollowing of the power center, in terms of a

disintegration of the traditional political authority, a decentralization of power and a pluralization of value systems. Social conflicts produced under the forty years of rule of Kuo-min Tang get exploded in different kinds of social movements, further crumbling the social order under the ancien regime. What deserves particular attention is, that even the identity of the "Republic of China", that is, the basis of legitimation of the old political institution, comes under severe challenge. Critic Fu Ta-wei 傅大爲 has the following remark about the situation,

The civil society of Taiwan after 1985 is one in which the Gramscian sense of hegemonic leadership is organized by the Min-chin Tang and other allied groups against the the state apparatus of Kuo-min Tang. They further use the civil society to 'become' a new state, and to take hold of the old state apparatus. This narrative should not be too far away from the fact.

八五年以後的台灣社會民間，是以民進黨及其許多聯盟團體，以葛蘭西意義下的霸權領導來組織一個對立於國民黨國家機器的「民間社會」，並進而讓這個民間社會「變成」一個新國家，再進佔老的國家機器；這個敘述，應該離事實並不太遠。
(245)

A new movement of national identity is engendered in which an abundance of masses is gathered to become the biggest counter-institutional power in Taiwan through the mobilization of the Min-chin Tang. Party politics has monopolized the struggle for hegemony in Taiwan. Undoubtedly the major parties are very tactically trying to manipulate the situation. On one side, we see Li Teng-hui attempting to harmonize the two contrasting national identities through his rhetoric of "Chung-hua Min-kuo tsai Taiwan" 中華民國在台灣 [Republic of China in Taiwan] and "Sheng-ming Kung-tung T'i" 生命共同體 [Life Community]. Also, we have Min-chin Tang trying to,

through notions of "Tsu-ch'un Kung-ho" 族群共和 [harmonization of ethnicities] and "Ming-yun Kung-tung T'i" 命運共同體 [Fate Community], construct an alliance of different ethnicities. Hsin Tang [New Party], the youngest party in the political scene, is trying to find a compromise between reunion with China and independence through the leadership of a non-local Taiwanese.

This focalization of party politics against the state implies that political antagonism is the fundamental form of conflicts in society, and so once it is solved, other kinds of conflicts will be solved. The result is, as a group of critics advocating for radical, pluralistic democracy remark, "any struggle of social groups in Taiwan today has to go through (party) politics as political mediation" (現今台灣任何社會群體的抗爭都必須透過（政黨）為政治中介。） (Robocop 70). The problem is then apparent. As I have tried to explain earlier, each kind of struggle is only partial. The prioritizing of political conflicts has thus marginalized and set the bottomlines for the struggles of other social groups. It is just another kind of totalitarianism and fascism. Today we still hear the saying of "without the nation (state) there will be no family". The future of Taiwan is being equated with that of the state. This has put Taiwan which has just been released from martial law into another kind of disintegration. No wonder Chang Ta-chun puts in his commentary about political prophecy novels that, "The people, who are most competent in giving 'our future' to the determination of politics, are undoubtedly the Chinese" (最擅於把「自己的未來」拱手交給政治去決定的，無疑是中國人。) (1992a:50). I feel that no matter what the politicians are striving for, whether independence or reunion, the future of Taiwan should be

pluralistic, not just political. It should be the future also, of the marginalized groups like the homosexuals, the children, the old, the wives, the indigenous, etc.. That is to say, no matter we have an independent Taiwan or a unified China, it should also be a place of equality for all those people. "Self-determination of the citizens" only in terms of voting cannot lead to real democracy, unless it can be supported by self-determination of the workers, the homosexuals, the unhoused, the women, the indigenous and so on. In this light, the identity of Taiwan means not just a political identity of the state. It has to be an identification with the different kinds of life in Taiwan, especially the different kinds of marginalized lives. Social struggles of groups like the homosexuals, the indigenous can enrich the meaning of the movement of national identity. What is needed is therefore a multiplication of political spaces and the prevention of the concentration of power at only one point.

By rejecting the prioritizing of political democracy, I am not trying to deflect social conflicts. I just believe that "there is no *unique* privileged position from which a uniform continuity of effects will follow, concluding with the transformation of society as a whole" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:169). Inequalities exist at every level of contemporary society. So I am indeed opting for a kind of democracy and citizenship that goes beyond Habermas's model of the public sphere. The original forms of democratic thought tended to constitute a *single* space within which the effects of political liberty and equality were to be manifested. The public/private distinction constituted the separation between on the one hand that single space in which differences between all citizens were erased through the

universal principle of equivalence, and on the other a plurality of private spaces in which the full force of those differences were maintained. What a pluralistic democracy aims at is displacing the line of demarcation between the public and the private space, thus exploding the very idea of a unique space of the constitution of the political. This breaking down of the distinction between the public and the private, far from rendering the public sphere apolitical, is a radical politicization, because it leads to a proliferation of radically new and different political spaces. The postmodern condition, then, Mouffe comments, provides a suitable environment for this development of a pluralistic concept of citizenship,

An adequate conception of citizenship today should be "postmodern" if we understand by that the need to acknowledge the particular, the heterogeneous, and the multiple...Only a pluralistic conception of citizenship can accommodate the specificity and multiplicity of democratic demands and provide a pole of identification for a wide range of democratic forces. The political community has to be viewed, then, as a diverse collection of communities, as a forum for creating unity without denying specificity. (1988:30)

The postmodern conception of citizenship acknowledges the particularity and heterogeneity of democratic demands, and so will allow the space for pluralistic social struggles. This is what Habermas fails to see. But for sure, contextualizing Habermas's notion of the public sphere in the postmodern condition does not mean that it should be pluralistic to the extent that each social group fights independently only for their own cause. Gramsci has shown the importance for these individual groups to help, make concessions to and appropriate the ideals of other groups. Indeed, discourses like anti-sexism, anti-racism, anti-heterosexuality need to be articulated

together so that they become "equivalent symbols of a unique and indivisible struggle" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:183). This will help strengthen and consolidate these individual struggles. This equivalence is hegemonic in the sense that it does not simply seek to establish an "alliance" between given interests, but modifies the very identity of the forces. For the defence of the interests of the workers not to be made at the expense of the rights of women, indigenous or students, it is necessary to establish an equivalence between these different struggles. It is only on this condition that the demanding of rights is not carried out on the basis of an individualistic problematic, but in the context of respect for the rights to equality of other subordinated groups. This is where I see Gadamer's hermeneutics can come to help. A hermeneutic construction of the public sphere can be an appropriate framework for conceptualizing counter-hegemonic struggles of the marginalized groups. Because of its recognition that human beings are essentially linguistic it can see that power relations exist at every level of society and that subjects under oppression are pluralistic. Because of its insistence on understanding as a primordial condition of being, it gives a space to every social group to understand/reconstruct themselves through historical and institutional practices. Because of its requirement of every human agent who seeks understanding to be truly open, to the extent that his or her political ideas can be radically changed, it gives a space to every marginalized group to have themselves changed, and empowers them to change the ideas of dominant political groups. Most important of all, it allows each marginalized group to understand the interests of other groups, so that they can act together. As Gadamer asserts, "In human relations the

most important thing is...to experience the Thou truly as a Thou, i.e., not to overlook his claim but to let him really say something to us. Here is where openness belongs...Without this kind of openness to another there is no genuine relationship" (1975:361). This openness gives us a hope in "the rediscovery of solidarities that could enter into the future society of humanity" (Gadamer 1981:86). Critic Yang Chao 楊照, in discussing the political future of Taiwan in relation to the co-existence of different provincialities, remarks that the crux of the issue lies in the way the Taiwanese deal with differences. As he puts it,

All along, the Taiwanese society has never established the habit to respect "the different"...We do not know that our way of thinking is in fact produced under specific lifestyle, and specific environment in which we grow up. Moreover we assume that everybody is the same. This kind of logic can only lead to arbitrary values.

* * *

Only when we learn to listen and further contemplate the inner stories of others can this disintegrated society in which everybody has his/her own self-serving desires have any chance to "transcend" anything, and find the new foundation for mutual understanding, communication and cooperation.

長期以來，台灣社會不曾建立起尊重「歧異」的習慣……我們不知道自己的想法其實是特定生活：特定成長環境的產物，而且我們假定所有人都是一樣的，這種邏輯底下只能導出獨斷的價值意念。(101-102)

* * *

唯為學會去傾聽、進而去揣摩別人心底的故事，這個分裂、各懷鬼胎的社會，才有可能真正「超越」甚麼，重新找到互相了解、溝通、合作的新礎石罷。(103)

The hermeneutic public sphere allows the space for this kind of understanding and respect. This is what makes counter-hegemonic struggles effective, and is what I understand by political praxis, that is, putting theory

into practice and vice versa, for genuine communication explores and expands the possibilities for social transformation. The literary texts, seen in this light, play an important role in helping people reconstruct their understanding about themselves and others. In the same commentary I just previously quoted, Yang Chao remarks,

In the process of knowing "the critical differences", one very important force is literary works. Literary works, which examine and reflect people's life and the details of their sentiments, ideally resemble windows, opened to a perspective which is unfamiliar and yet complicated. It does not only allow us to listen to the sad and happy voices of the world, but to understand those sad and happy voices and the reasons underneath. Taiwanese literature all along the development of history is seriously lacking in this.

在認知「重大差異」的過程中，一項非常重要的動力是文學作品。觀照人群生活、心情脈絡細節的文學作品，理想上應該像是一扇扇的窗戶，開向一個個景象陌生然而繁複的視野，讓我們不僅聆聽世界悲喜的聲音，而且理解之所以悲喜的聲音，然而理解之所以悲喜的特殊原因。在這一點上，台灣的文學在歷史發展中顯然嚴重缺席。

(101)

To push it further, literary works play the important role of preparing and equipping subjectivities in participating in social movements in counter-hegemonic struggles. I regard Chang Ta-chun's works as attempts to fill the lack Yang laments about. In the first chapter I have presented the idea that Chang, instead of attempting to create a political identity of Taiwan, extends the notions of politics to every site of social struggles. The three texts I study are ambitious attempts to deliver the subject from the interpellation of historical, autobiographical and institutional discourses to new realms of understanding. Let me now conclude with a few remarks on a issue that is prevalent in all of the three texts--the issue of remembrance as a form of

counter-memory--in order to explain how these texts help us understand ourselves and others anew through our memory of our individual and collective histories. We find that, in each of these texts, the characters undergo a process of remembering through forgetfulness. No matter Tien Mama or Chi Ta-hsia in *Shih-chien Chu*, Ta Tou-chun or the little sister in *Wo Mei-mei*, or the hard-boiled detective Old Lu in *Ta Shuo-fang Chia*, each is using their memory, whether personal or collective, in interacting with historical, autobiographical and journalistic texts. In this process of remembrance, however, they need to critically forget or filter their memory in order that they can transcend their originally interpellated positions. Enough has actually been said of individual texts. In the following, I will try to relate this issue of counter-memory back to the Gadamer's hermeneutics of understanding and the production of a genuinely pluralistic society.

Counter-memory as a form of remembrance represents a critical reading of how the past informs the present and how the present reads the past. It is constituted by a dialectical movement between remembrance and forgetfulness, in an attempt to rewrite the language of resistance in allowing people to speak from their particular histories and voices. So it refuses to treat democracy as merely a set of inherited political knowledge, which constructs social relations that will empower certain and disempower other social groups. On the contrary, it affirms and interrogates "the histories, memories and stories of the devalued others who have been marginalized from the official discourse of the canon" (Giroux 101). Hence it will be able to provide the grounds for "a politics of solidarity within difference" (Aronowitz and Giroux 1991:126) because on the one hand, it attempts to

recover communities of memory and narratives of struggle that provide a collective sense of identity to various dominant and subordinate groups; on the other hand, it allows the self-representation and the struggle for the marginalized. Hence a discourse of counter-memory, intended against an essentialist and closed narrative, is to me part of a utopian project that recognizes "the composite, heterogeneous, open and ultimately indeterminate character of the democratic tradition" (Mouffe 1988a:41).

Remembrance as a form of counter-memory indeed reminds us that our history will be able to provide us with a positive vision of an alternative future. It helps us realize that there is no language, knowledge or social practice that is beyond the past. In this light, how can we reject the efforts of Gadamer in reaffirming the importance of our traditions and prejudices in the process of understanding ? Traditions serve to place people self-consciously in their histories by making them aware of their memories constituted in differences, struggles and hopes. Traditions in postmodern terms constitute "a form of counter-memory that recovers those complex yet submerged identities that constitute the social and political construction of public life" (Giroux 122). They help us locate political praxis, as does Gramsci, in the actual historical context. As Gadamer argues, "The nature of the hermeneutical experience is not that something is outside and desires admission. Rather, we are possessed by something and precisely by means of it we are opened up for the new, the different, the true" (1976:9). And this something is our own past, our own traditions, through which we can come up with a pluralistic understanding of what we need. In this sense, hermeneutical politics is a politics rejecting transcendental foundations. It is

a politics which is grounded in our very interpretation of history, which aims at offering a better understanding of the tasks that a democratic society needs to fulfill at a particular time in order to improve the conditions which make possible the development of the benefits of both the individuals and social groups, against a backdrop of traditions and memories. Traditions thus have the power to link the relationship between the personal and the political as part of a broader struggle for justice and social transformation.

The way Chang evokes the readers' counter-memory, the way he puts us back into a dialectical relationship with traditions deserves our further attention. Chang is not pushing readers into a very painful and fearful encounter with our historical traditions. On the contrary, he uses a very playful, very delightful tone, always understating the things we usually regard as very significant. He creates very ridiculous characters, like Chi Ta-hsia, or the hard-boiled detective, and writes about very minute things, in an attempt to introduce more fun into the novel, to release it from great ideas. In his commentary on another Taiwanese writer Chu Hsi-ling 朱西甯, he talks about the importance of "nonsense" in his works. We can more or less understand a little about the rationale beneath his playing in his own literary works,

We cannot get rid of this "nonsense" as we like, because it is exactly due to the "irrelevance to the great themes" of this "nonsense" that careful readers who try who feel the fun of the narrative of the writer can discover: fiction can have its content which is not relevant to any great themes but which can still bring joy to the readers...I say "irrelevance to the great themes", because those "great themes" basically do not have any relation to fiction. The narrative of fiction can then be liberated from the cliché of "great themes" and be set free.

我們並不能隨心所欲地刪掉這些「廢話」，因為正是這些「廢話」之「無關宏旨」，使細讀此一小說並感受作者敘述趣味的讀者發現：小說也可以有其非關任何宏旨卻仍能帶給讀者閱讀喜悅的內容……所謂「無關宏旨」，乃是由於那些「宏旨」原本就不必然與小說有關，小說的敘述也從始自那些「宏旨」的陳腔濫調中解放出來，得著了自由。
(1992c:121-122)

He wants to liberate the writing of novels from great themes, from cliché, and to divert the readers' expectations about the text (ibid 121). Instead of crashing into reality, he puts us in the uncertain realm of representation. Instead of investing into great themes, he parodies history, reality and our daily life. Apart from provoking readers' reflection, he tries to please them. It is through this that he manages to develop a politics that connects with the everyday life of the citizens in a manner that affectively matters to them, in activating sites of resistance against dominant practices. This is particularly important, taking into consideration what Grossberg argues about the possible uses of affective relations,

Affective empowerment is increasingly important in a world in which pessimism has become sense, in which people increasingly feel incapable of making a difference, and in which differences increasingly seem not to matter, not to make any difference. Affective relations are, at least potentially, the condition of possibility for the optimism, invigoration and passion which are necessary for any struggle to change the world. (86)

Chang's parodying is a way of drawing people closer to their everyday life, in an attempt to reject "the monologue of totalizing narratives and theories" (Giroux 247). This is at once a historical and political project, one which resurrects the ongoing struggle for difference and one which situates that difference within the broader struggle of cultural and social justice.

How does Chang look at his own role? In the meeting I had with him last summer, he told me, "Writing is an occasion for self-reflection and self-indulgence. The writer must have a critical awareness so that he can change his own role, and imitate the attitudes of others." A writer, to him, needs to maintain a true openness to the unfamiliar, and a readiness to get himself radically changed. He aspires more to be a friend (chih-yin 知音) than a guide (chih-yin 指引) (1992d:200). Through his works, he just wants to open a personal space both for himself and his readers, one which is capable of bringing transformation. But instead of creating an identity for readers to identify with, he tries to create a space for readers to articulate their own identities through their understanding and interpretation. In Fu Ta-wei's words, it is an attempt

not to 'manage the world' from a center perspective like 'moral responsibility', but from the 'margin' of little groups situated in their own condition and historical context.

不從某種「道德責任」式的中心觀點來「經理天下」，而從自身存在情境與歷史脈絡的各小群體的「邊緣」出發。
(13)

A perspective liberated from a moral mission will allow a microscopic vision of the structures of power in society. The three texts I study can be regarded as attempts to work from the margin to reflect upon the apparatus of the civil society, for example, history textbooks, family system and media operation. It means that they are grounded in bringing people to a reflection about the very trivial conditions of their everyday life, rather than in a mission to change the world. It hinges on the democratic potential of language as "the game of interpretation that we are engaged in everyday"

(Gadamer 1976:32). This game is one in which "nobody is above or before the others; everybody is at the center, is 'it' in this game" (ibid). Each one of us can come up with new understandings of ourselves and of others and can thus intervene into the process of restructuring the asymmetrical relations of power. It is to me more practical and down-to-earth than many ambitious yet abstract postmodern slogans like "let the subaltern speak" and "listen to the voice of the Other".

It is through language that human beings are inscribed and it is language which constructs their sense of the political, ethical, economical and social. Literature in this light should be a very suitable place for equipping people for social struggles, through their understanding, against dominant practices. Through the three brief analyses of three works of Chang Ta'chun, I hope I have managed to explain how literature helps people construct their understanding of the self and of others amidst historical and institutional practices. I also hope that I have shown why it is only through conceptualizing the public sphere as hermeneutic can we make the space for the struggles of marginal groups. Ultimately, it is my utmost concern that through the realm of interpretation literature creates, readers can get prepared for participating in social movements, in bringing transformation to the whole society.

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